VISIT…

AS FILM STUDIES

THE ESSENTIAL INTRODUCTION

Sarah Casey Benyahia, Freddie Gaffney and John White

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AS FILM STUDIES
THE ESSENTIAL INTRODUCTION

AS *Film Studies: The Essential Introduction* will give students the confidence to tackle every part of the AS Level Film Studies course. The authors, who have wide-ranging experience as teachers, examiners and authors, introduce students step by step to the skills involved in the study of film. Individual chapters address the following key areas:

- Film form
- Narrative
- Genre
- Practical application of learning
- Hollywood and British cinema
- Films as products
- Audiences as fans and consumers
- Stars
- New technologies and the film industry
- British and Irish cinema

Specifically designed to be user-friendly, AS *Film Studies: The Essential Introduction* includes:

- Activities
- Example exam questions
- Suggestions for further reading
- A glossary of key terms and resources
- Case studies

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PREFACE

It wasn't that long ago that the examining team for WJEC (Welsh Joint Education Committee) AS (then simply A Level) Film Studies could all sit around a small kitchen table, and that to study film was seen as a 'soft option', often associated with a solitary enthusiast teacher. Now however Film Studies is offered in a rapidly increasing number of centres, is supported by a large examining team, and is rightly perceived to be a challenging, exciting, and life enhancing choice for thousands of candidates who take this subject each year.

This book was conceived to offer advice and guidance to both student and teacher alike, and closely follows the most up-to-date specification from WJEC (which comes into use in September 2006). Crammed full of film facts with easy explanations of terminology, case studies, activities, and sample exam questions, it is intended that it be used to support each unit of the course, and extend learning beyond the baseline for succeeding at AS Level, into concepts, techniques, and films that stretch and stimulate the mind.

It has not been written as a 'crammer', nor to establish an orthodoxy or 'canon' of films that are deemed worthy of study. Indeed the writers hope rather that it will act as a springboard for the reader in building the confidence to apply the concepts contained within it to their own choice of film, with no sense that *American Pie* or *Layer Cake* are any less use to the study of film or have less to offer than *Casablanca* or *Brief Encounter*.

Furthermore, the book reflects an underpinning feature of the WJEC specification, that gives priority to the students' point of entry as a place to build from rather than on to, thereby valuing any initial filmic knowledge they bring as the best place to start from. It aims to foster an approach to film that will enable the study of any film as a valuable artefact, and thereby encourage personal response, active research, the practical application of learning, and greater diversity in study, allowing interests and enthusiasm a place in education.

We would like to express our thanks to Katrina Chandler (Development Editor, Routledge), Julene Knox (Picture Researcher) and Rosemary Morlin (Copy Editor) for their help in the preparation of this book. Thanks are also due to those colleagues and family members who provided invaluable support and understanding throughout; and to the staff and students of the Media and Film Departments at Colchester Sixth Form College and Cambridge Regional College for their helpful contributions.

We hope you enjoy the selections we have made, the activities we have designed, and the explanations we have offered, and that we can usefully keep you company on your journey into the world of film.

INTRODUCTION

What is Film Studies? What does it mean to study films?

This introductory chapter:

- puts forward the idea that studying films will involve you in something over and above simply enjoying going to the cinema – what that 'something' is should begin to become clearer as you work your way through this book;
- suggests studying films will involve you in taking a more analytical approach to your whole experience of cinema;
- highlights how important it is for you to be prepared to entertain new ideas about something that is perhaps already an important part of your life;
- offers an initial introduction to some of the activities you will need to be prepared to undertake if you are studying films;
- suggests the sort of questions you might need to consider asking yourselves about films;
- introduces a range of different writing skills required of Film Studies students.

NOTEBOX . . .

This chapter will be directly relevant to the module FS1 – Film: Making Meaning 1 in that it starts to introduce possible ways of approaching films. In particular it is directly relevant to what the examiners describe as 'spectator study', which is about how each of us watches and makes sense of films. More importantly though, this section should act as a general introduction to the whole idea of Film Studies allowing you to gain an overview of the subject and the sorts of things that are going to be asked of you before you begin work on the more specific syllabus requirements.

GOING TO THE CINEMA

Going to the cinema has been a pleasurable pastime enjoyed throughout the world for around 100 years. With a fast expanding DVD market it seems people are increasingly enjoying watching films at home, but even so the spectacle offered by the cinema experience continues to be appreciated as something distinctively different.

ACTIVITY . . .

1 How often do you go to the cinema? If possible, discuss this in groups. What seems to be the average? Who goes the most and how often is this?

2 Now, a perhaps more difficult question. Why do you go to the cinema? Try to decide on a list that covers as many reasons as possible for you personally. If you can, discuss your ideas with others. Are there similarities or differences in the reasons given?

3 If you are in a class with others, in small groups try to decide on a collective list that covers as many reasons as possible.

NOTEBOX . . .

We all enjoy watching films, whether in the cinema or on TV. Cinema attendance, after many years of decline, is increasing each year and a new generation of film-goers is appreciating the pleasures of the 'big screen', a pleasure which even a 30-inch TV set cannot provide.

(Nelmes 2003: 1)

(Note the double use of the word 'pleasure(s)' here, emphasizing the key factor determining why we watch film and also why we chose to try to study it in more depth.)

CAN'T WE JUST ENJOY FILMS?

Amongst some people who attend the cinema and/or watch DVDs on a regular basis there is a certain resistance to the idea of 'studying films'. For people taking this approach, watching films at the cinema is seen as an especially intense form of entertainment that offers the chance of escapist fantasies that will only be undermined or devalued in some way by analysis. After-the-event discussion of the emotional experience offered by one film compared to another is encouraged and indeed is an important part of the whole experience as far as these enthusiasts are concerned. The physical attributes (whether of strength or beauty or some other feature) of one star are readily compared with similar attributes in other stars. The thrills provided in one film are assessed against the thrills provided in another. Discussion and debate over

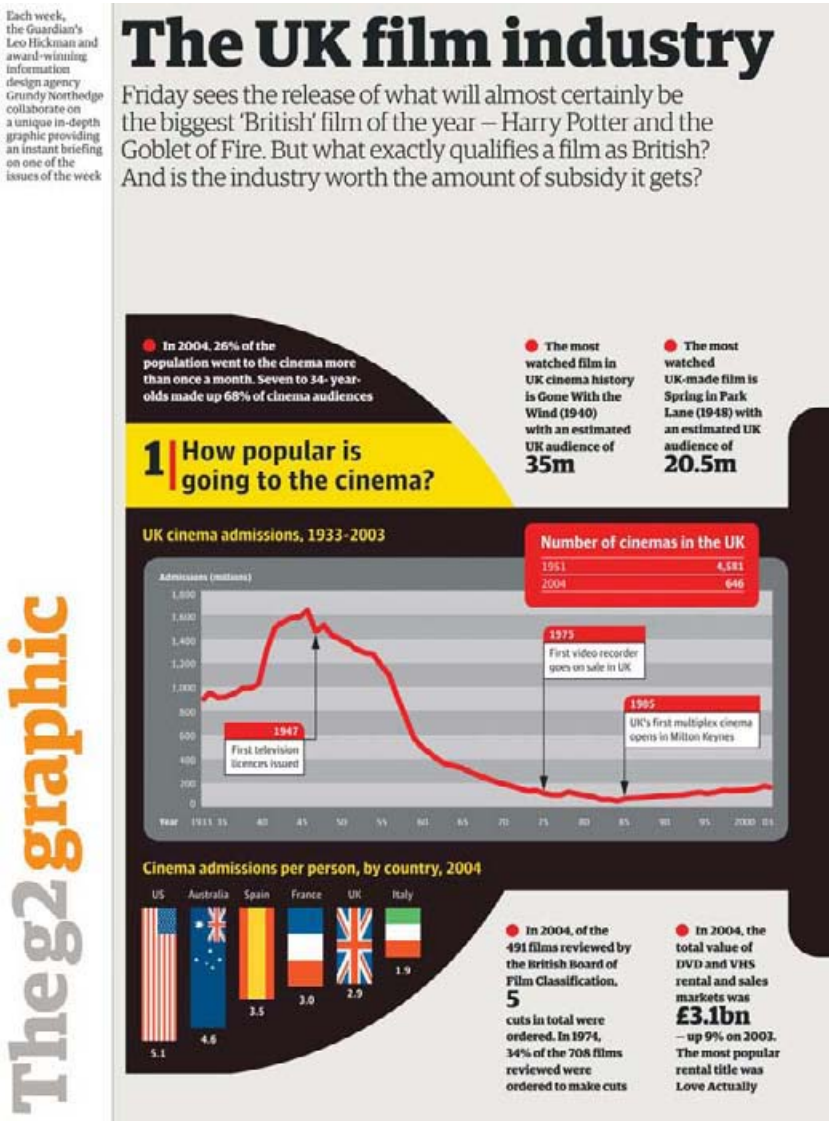

Each week, the Guardian's Leo Hickman and award-winning information design agency Grundy Northedge collaborate on a unique in-depth graphic providing an instant briefing on one of the issues of the week
The UK film industry
Friday sees the release of what will almost certainly be the biggest 'British' film of the year – Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire. But what exactly qualifies a film as British? And is the industry worth the amount of subsidy it gets?
The g2 graphic
In 2004, 26% of the population went to the cinema more than once a month. Seven to 34-year-olds made up 68% of cinema audiences
1 How popular is going to the cinema?
The most watched film in UK cinema history is Gone With the Wind (1940) with an estimated UK audience of 35m
The most watched UK-made film is Spring in Park Lane (1948) with an estimated UK audience of 20.5m
UK cinema admissions, 1933-2003
Admissions (millions)
1947
First television licences issued
1975
First video recorder goes on sale in UK
1985
UK's first multiplex cinema opens in Milton Keynes
Number of cinemas in the UK
1951 4,581
2004 646
Cinema admissions per person, by country, 2004
US 5.1
Australia 4.6
Spain 3.5
France 3.0
UK 2.9
Italy 1.9
In 2004, of the 491 films reviewed by the British Board of Film Classification, 5 cuts in total were ordered. In 1974, 34% of the 708 films reviewed were ordered to make cuts
In 2004, the total value of DVD and VHS rental and sales markets was £3.1bn – up 9% on 2003. The most popular rental title was Love Actually

Figure i *The UK Film Industry*
Source: Graphic by Grundy Northedge from The Guardian, 14 November 2005 © Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005. Reproduced with permission

	Film	Country of origin	Box office gross (£m)	No. of opening cinemas	Opening weekend gross (£m)	Distributor
1	Shrek 2	USA	48.10	512	16.22	UIP
2	Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban	UK/USA	46.08	535	23.88	Warner Bros
3	Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason	UK/USA	36.00	504	10.44	UIP
4	The Incredibles	USA	32.27	494	9.75	Buena Vista
5	Spider-Man 2	USA	26.72	504	8.77	Sony Pictures
6	The Day After Tomorrow	USA	25.21	429	7.32	Twentieth Century Fox
7	Shark Tale	USA	22.82	504	7.55	UIP
8	Troy	UK/USA/Mal	18.00	504	6.02	Warner Bros
9	I, Robot	USA	17.98	447	4.75	Twentieth Century Fox
10	Scooby-Doo Too	USA	16.49	489	3.55	Warner Bros
11	Van Helsing	USA	15.15	458	5.43	UIP
12	Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events	USA	13.26	452	2.21	UIP
13	Starsky & Hutch	USA	12.60	81	0.41	Buena Vista
14	The Last Samurai	USA/Jap/NZ	11.90	430	2.72	Warner Bros
15	The Bourne Supremacy	USA/Ger	11.56	418	2.72	UIP
16	The Passion of the Christ	USA	11.08	46	0.23	Icon
17	School of Rock	USA/Ger	10.50	376	2.74	UIP
18	The Village	USA	10.31	433	2.95	Buena Vista
19	Lost in Translation	USA/Jap	10.06	96	0.80	Momentum
20	Dodge Ball: A True Underdog Story	USA	10.03	315	2.20	Twentieth Century Fox

Figure ii *The Top 20 Films at the UK Box Office, 2004*
Source: UK Film Council Statistical Yearbook 2004. Reproduced with permission of the UK Film Council

the relative merits of one star over another, or one film over another, is endlessly recycled. However, engagement in an academic way with film is seen as detrimental to the experience itself.

Hopefully, as a film student you will continue to enjoy these sorts of discussions with your friends since it will form an important foundation to your studies, but you will also be prepared to try out new methods of approach that will often involve being more analytical in your viewing.

ACTIVITY . . .

- On average how often do you watch films at home: once a week, twice a week, or more?
- Do you watch on your own generally, or with others? And, if with others, is this family or friends?
- Do you usually view films you have recorded from TV, rental DVDs, pay-to-view films, or film channel films?
- Do you discuss the films you have watched with other people? If so, try to compile a list of the sorts of things you talk about.

ACTIVITY . . .

1. Write a short 250-word review of a film you saw recently for a film magazine or newspaper of your choice. Name the magazine and try to write in an appropriate style. Write a further 100 words describing who you were seeing as your target audience and how you were trying to write the piece.
2. If you are able to, in groups exchange reviews and read those written by other people.
3. Decide on the best one in each group to be read out to the whole class. List the features of the chosen article that as a group you believe made it the best.
4. After the chosen articles have been read, try to compare the lists of key factors for these articles that each group has arrived at. Has each group used the same sorts of criteria or are there significant differences?

No problem

There is no problem with adopting an attitude towards films that sees them as pure entertainment or escapist fantasy since pleasure is clearly an important part of the whole experience of cinema. Indeed, this is a part of the experience we will be seeking to emphasize and explore in some depth.

KEY TERM

PLEASURE Films clearly give us pleasure in a range of ways, otherwise we would not watch them, and yet studying academic subjects is somehow often seen to be at odds with the idea of pleasure. However, since pleasure is the thing that beyond all else stimulates our initial interest in films we should not dismiss it out of hand. In fact, the idea of exactly how films provide us with pleasure will be a key approach to film for us.

The way in which film gives pleasure is most apparent when we consider not just audiences in general but our own personal response to films and yet it is so often neglected by those of us who wish to study film. Maybe this is because the concept of pleasure does not seem to sit well in relation to the idea of study. Or perhaps this neglect of the pleasure principle is to do with a difficulty in deciding how to study such a seemingly vague notion.

However we view all of this, the concept is clearly important not only in relation to narrative structure but also in relation to the way in which human beings seem to be able to respond to the sheer aesthetic joy of colour, movement, light, shape and size and in particular changing colour, movement, light, shape and size.

The best way to think about the ways in which films create pleasure for an audience is to analyse our own enjoyment of films. Pleasure could be provided by (among other things) an exciting or romantic narrative, the escapism of identifying with characters unlike ourselves or by the visual pleasure provided by the big screen. Film Studies academics have spent a long time trying to explain the different pleasures experienced by film spectators, particularly the enjoyment of aspects of film which do not immediately seem pleasurable such as watching horror films.

ACTIVITY . . .

At this early stage in your studies, how would you describe the pleasures film gives you? Try to list the variety of possible pleasures and compare your list with others.

FILM STUDIES AS A SUBJECT

Using films as pure escapist entertainment is one possible approach to films, but as Film Studies students we are going to be concerned with considering a much greater range of ways of understanding and experiencing film. This will involve recognizing the complexity of our interaction with film and acknowledging that there is no simple way of approaching film. Hopefully you are now beginning to gain some idea as to what Film Studies is and, perhaps, some inkling of what studying film is going to involve.

ACTIVITY . . .

Before you read the rest of this section, put the heading 'Film Studies' at the top of a sheet of paper and take a few minutes to list all the things you would expect to be doing whilst studying film. Remember to take into account the sorts of things you have been asked to do so far. If possible compare your list with others.

You may have heard other people joke that Film Studies is just about sitting around and watching films. Happily, it has to be admitted, there is a certain element of truth to this since it is clearly impossible to study a film without first watching it closely, just as it is impossible to analyse critically a novel without first reading it carefully. However, there is rather more to Film Studies than this description suggests.

Questions we might ask ourselves

Early in our investigation of possible ways of approaching films it would be useful to ask ourselves exactly what activities we should expect to undertake in order to explore films in a way that will offer more than immediate, easy entertainment.

So, what does it mean to study a film? Dictionary definitions of 'study' often involve the idea of 'devoting time and thought'. So we could suggest studying film would involve spending time thinking about it; but how would we do this and what would we think about? What exactly are we supposed to be thinking about as we are watching a film at the cinema or a DVD or video at home?

Initial uncertainties might raise questions such as:

- Are there particular ways of thinking about film that we should be adopting?
- What should we be looking for as we watch these films?
- How will we know if we have found anything worth commenting upon?

And then, if we do find something we think is interesting how should we comment?

- Is there a particular sort of language, or range of critical terms, that we should be using?
- Or is this really nothing more than jargon and should jargon be avoided?

And, perhaps most interestingly, what is meant when people talk about 'reading' films?

- In what sense is the activity of watching films akin to reading?

'Reading' films

Reading is often defined as interpreting symbols in relation to intended meanings. So, in the straightforward everyday sense of 'reading', the symbols 'c', 'a' and 't' can be combined in that sequence to suggest a certain type of animal that exists in our common, shared experience of the everyday world. The concept of 'reading' implies a

shared language that is common to the writer and the reader and that enables messages to be transferred, or communicated. It also implies a shared world in some sense and a shared understanding of that world. Thinking about this we might wonder:

- What symbols might we need to interpret when 'reading' films?
- How will we know the intended meanings?
- Do we naturally go through this process as we watch films, or is this a special activity we are going to have to learn in the same way that we learnt to read books in our early years?
- Is it true to say that films depend upon the existence of a shared language common to both the makers of films and their audiences?

KEY TERM

READING This is a fundamentally important term in our whole approach to Film Studies. 'Reading' immediately suggests a depth of investigation and an intensity of focus that 'watching films' simply does not convey.

ACTIVITY . . .

How would you define this shared language that is common to both filmmakers and the audiences for their films? In writing we obviously have words, sentences and paragraphs but what do we have in film that might in some way correspond to these elements? If possible, discuss your thoughts with others.

(Do not worry if your thoughts are rather vague and uncertain at the moment: the key thing is simply to start to think about the idea of film as a language that we might be said to be reading as we watch.)

WHAT ARE FILMS?

For the moment we will go no further in trying to answer these questions to do with the concept of 'reading', but let's bear them in mind as we try to set out from a slightly different starting point. Let us begin by asking ourselves the apparently straightforward question: what are films? To start we might suggest that they are stories recorded on film by a camera to be shown in cinemas via projectors (although even this is becoming increasingly problematic as both the form implied by 'film' and the outlets available for 'film' are becoming increasingly diverse as new technologies multiply).

Stories

We could argue that stories, cameras and cinemas are likely to be some of the key elements in our investigation. In which case we would need to question the nature of stories:

- What subject areas do the stories typically cover?
- Are there particular subject areas in which film has shown special interest over the years?
- How are the stories constructed? Are there typical elements, often or always to be found?

ACTIVITY . . .

1 Go through each of these questions and answer them quickly in note form.
2 Discuss your ideas in small groups if possible and report back to the whole class. Try to add other people's ideas to your initial notes as the discussions develop.

Cameras

Let's look now at the issue of cameras.

- What are these cameras like and how are they used?
- Has the technology of cameras changed over time and how has this affected films and the filmmaking process?
- What is the relationship between the director, the camera and the actors in the making of films?
- What is the relationship between cameras, the real world and the fictional world of stories?

ACTIVITY . . .

1 Go through each of these questions and answer then quickly in note form.
2 Discuss your ideas in small groups if possible and report back to the whole class. Again, add to your own notes as the discussions develop.

(Once more, do not worry at this stage if you are rather vague and uncertain about how to answer some of these questions; the key thing is simply that you should begin to think carefully about the nature of films.)

Cinemas, or the 'viewing experience'

Let's now consider more closely the whole notion of cinemas: the strange idea of entering a darkened auditorium with a group of strangers to sit and watch projected images on a large screen. (Although, to emphasize the point once again, we need to be aware that this viewing experience seems to be changing with people increasingly turning to DVDs.)

- What are cinemas exactly and what are the key elements to a cinema? To what extent have these always been the same?
- Who goes to cinemas and why do people go to them? Has the sort of people who go to cinemas changed over time?
- What is the experience of being in the cinema like and how has all this changed over time?
- How is the film and the experience of watching it altered when we watch at home? Is the experience (and therefore the film?) changed when we watch at home with others? And what if the 'others' are parents or alternatively friends of our own age? Does that alter the experience?

ACTIVITY . . .

1 Go through each of these questions and answer then quickly in note form.
2 Discuss your ideas in small groups if possible and report back to the whole class. Add to your own notes.

NOTEBOX . . .

Try to keep your notes for Film Studies together in one place and organized in such a way that you can find specific topic areas as and when required. Above all, try to find a few minutes after each session to go back over the notes you have made and the ideas that have come up. This will remind you of the key ideas and will help to ensure you have really taken them on board. So much to do with studying is really simply about organization; and above all, about organizing your time effectively.

Questions, questions, questions

As we ask these questions about film in relation to stories, cameras and cinemas more questions might quite naturally spring to mind.

- Aren't films shown on television, video, DVD and the Internet now as well as in cinemas?

- And aren't they shown not just on terrestrial television but via satellite, cable and pay-per-view?
- And so, how would watching films via these different media change or affect the experience?
- And, are films all stories? What about filmed documentaries, are they part of our study?
- And, where is the boundary between a fictional story and a factual documentary?

In some ways this is moving into the realm of philosophical questions because we are going to be forced to ask, what fact and fiction are, what it means for something to be true to life and, indeed what truth is and how we recognize it. Soon the questions will begin to come thick and fast.

- Why are films made? There must be a whole host of reasons, but what are they?
- Who makes them? We always hear about the stars and the directors, but who else is involved?
- How are films made and what exactly does the process involve?
- To what extent is it a creative process? To what extent is it an industrial process? To what extent is it a commercial process?
- Why do we talk about different types of film, like sci-fi, horror, film noir, thriller, melodrama, or western?
- What about these cameras: who operates them and who decides what to shoot and when?
- And then how do they decide the order in which to put the shots together, what bits of film to use and what not to use?
- What is the role of actors? They seem to be accorded quite a degree of importance. What exactly is a star? How do you move from being an actor to being a star?
- For that matter, what exactly is a director? What does he do? Or, what does she do? I wonder if there have been many women directors? How many female directors do you know?
- And, who runs the production companies that make films and the chains of cinemas that show films?
- And, what about the marketing and the advertising, who is responsible for that? We are constantly being subjected to it but who decides the level of publicity and advertising?

KEY TERMS

INDUSTRIAL PROCESS An industrial process is one that is involved in the manufacture of goods that are being made for sale.

COMMERCIAL PROCESS A commercial process is one that is focused upon achieving a financial return, in other words making a profit.

You should notice how both of these terms emphasize the idea of films as being at the heart of a series of processes. These processes can be followed through for individual films and this will give us a greater understanding of the exact nature of films and their place within our society.

The more we consider the nature of films, the more it sounds like there is a whole massive industry of multinational proportions behind what definitely seems to amount to a massive commercial enterprise.

- How does it operate both within individual countries and globally?
- Has it always been as big as it would seem to be today?
- Is it set to get bigger still or is it in decline in the face of new technologies?

NOTEBOX . . .

Questions

If there is one key to understanding the approach taken throughout this book this is it. As a Film Studies student (indeed as a student of any sort) you must be continually asking yourself questions and seeking answers. It sounds easy and only too obvious but adopting a questioning attitude demands real effort, commitment and above all, thought. If you can get this questioning and thinking approach right then everything else will fall into place.

HISTORY, SOCIAL CONTEXT AND POLITICS

We are beginning to get somewhere. We have a whole series of questions, the answers to which would seem to form some part of finding out about film and the way it operates within the present context, and the way it has operated within a historical context. We also have the feeling that the more questions we ask the more we find, with all of them taking us further into the subject and each of them seeming to demand some part of our attention. In fact, we begin to get a sense of the wide-ranging nature of the studies we are about to undertake.

- Already we begin to realize that films do not exist outside of a society and certain social relations.
- Already we begin to see that since we are dealing with an industry we are going to have to at least be aware of business and economic considerations.
- Already we begin to see films as products of particular societies at particular moments in their historical development.

But at the same time we are wondering about the contributions of directors and actors, and perhaps camera operators (or cinematographers, if we know the word). Clearly close investigation of individual films is going to be necessary, but at the same time it is already looking as if we are not going to be able to 'read' films in isolation but rather that we are going to have to see them to some extent at least within social, historical, cultural and perhaps even political contexts.

HOLLYWOOD AND ALTERNATIVE CINEMAS

Most of the films we will be looking at in this book would probably be seen as representing the dominant Hollywood mainstream, while others might be seen as constituting art-house or alternative offerings. Most of the films we deal with will be American or British but we will also be considering one or two films from other countries. So, we are going to need to be aware from the beginning of our studies that there have been different film movements in history and that there are different national cinemas around the world, and also that each of these film movements and national cinemas could be seen in some sense to be operating against the backdrop of a dominant Western cinema known as Hollywood. Sometimes there will be a strong sense of alternative cinemas being anti-Hollywood, but at other times the most powerful impulse will seem to be towards cross-fertilization between different cinemas (or approaches to filmmaking) and the Hollywood 'norm' or 'standard'.

CONCLUSION

Studying film requires us:

- to 'read' individual films carefully and thoughtfully;
- to recognize that films are made and viewed in particular ways that can be studied;
- to be aware of the need to adopt a questioning attitude.

FURTHER READING

Dyer, R. (1998) 'Introduction to Film Studies', in J. Hill and P. Church-Gibson (eds) *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Monaco, J. (2000) 'Preface to 2nd edition' in J. Monaco *How to Read a Film: Movies, Media, Multimedia*, 3rd edn, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nelmes, J. (2003) 'Introduction' in J. Nelmes *An Introduction to Film Studies*, 3rd edn, London: Routledge.

Phillips, P. (2000) *Understanding Film Texts: Meaning and Experience*, London: BFI (Chapter 1).

PART 1
MAKING MEANING 1 (FS1)

Although each chapter here will have a slightly different focus in relation to the demands of AS Film Studies, taken as a whole this part of the book should work as direct preparation for the WJEC coursework module FS1 – Film: Making Meaning.

1 FILM FORM

What is film construction? What does it mean to say a film has been 'put together'?

This chapter:

- outlines the four key areas of film 'language' denoted as mise en scène, cinematography, editing and sound;
- considers ways of analysing film construction techniques.

NOTEBOX . . .

This chapter will be directly relevant to your study of film form in FS1 – Film: Making Meaning 1 for the WJEC's AS Level in Film Studies and will form vital underpinning knowledge for that part of your coursework described as 'Written Analysis 2'. It will also help put in place vital underpinning foundations for all that you do in FS3 – Messages and Values: British and Irish Cinema. In addition the section on the film *Orphans* could form a useful introduction to that film as part of your study of British cinema.

FILMS MENTIONED

If you are working your way through the whole or parts of this chapter you will find it useful to have watched *Seven* (Fincher, 1995) and helpful to have access to scenes, clips and single shots from at least some of the following films:

- *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (Ritchie, 1998)
- *Lord of the Rings: the Fellowship of the Ring* (Jackson, 2001)
- *Whale Rider* (Caro, 2002)
- *A Hard Day's Night* (Lester, 1964)
- *Mildred Pierce* (Curtiz, 1945)
- *The Crying Game* (Jordan, 1992)
- *East is East* (O'Donnell, 1999)
- *Psycho* (Hitchcock, 1960)

- *On the Waterfront* (Kazan, 1954)
- *La Haine* (Kassowitz, 1995)
- *Raging Bull* (Scorsese, 1980)
- *Schindler's List* (Spielberg, 1997)
- *The Searchers* (Ford, 1956)
- *My Beautiful Laundrette* (Frears, 1985)
- *Visions of Light* (Glassman, McCarthy and Samuels, 1992)
- *Reservoir Dogs* (Tarantino, 1991)
- *Bloody Sunday* (Greengrass, 2002)
- *The Blair Witch Project* (Myrick/Sanchez, 1999)
- *Donnie Darko* (Kelly, 2001)
- *Jackie Brown* (Tarantino, 1997)
- *Russian Ark* (Sokurov, 2002)
- *The Killing Fields* (1984)
- *Orphans* (Mullan, 1999)

What does it mean to say films are 'put together'?

What people mean when they use this phrase is that each of the films we see in the cinema is built by using a few basic elements of film construction. As a filmmaker you always need a setting or a location in which to film and a cast of actors who will be dressed in certain ways and be expected to use certain props while delivering certain (usually) predetermined lines. You will also need a camera or cameras to film the action, and then some means of chopping up the resulting footage you have taken and putting it back together again in the order you decide suits the story you are trying to tell. Settings, actors, costumes, props, a script and the derived footage to be edited: out of these basic elements you will 'put together' your film. Out of convention but also in order to evoke certain responses from your audience you might also add a music soundtrack.

Any successful approach to the study of film will depend upon coming to terms with the idea that films are constructs that have been 'put together' by filmmakers from a series of common component parts that we can identify and name. To create a film, filmmakers work with each of these individual parts; and so in studying any film we can take it apart in an effort to see how and (most importantly) why the various bits might have been used in the particular way they have.

MISE EN SCÈNE: SETTING

Mise en scène is a French term that refers to a series of elements of film construction that can be seen within the frame of the individual shot; perhaps the most obvious and all encompassing of these is setting.

ACTIVITY . . .

Consider the opening to any film you have seen recently. What was the setting and why do you think it had been chosen? Was it appropriate to the film and if so, in what ways?

If, as in the opening to *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (Ritchie, 1998), we find ourselves in an urban landscape of markets, small shops and lock-ups that is full of East End 'wide-boys' we know where we are in film terms and begin to have an idea of what to expect. If, as in the opening to *Lord of the Rings: the Fellowship of the Ring* (Jackson, 2001), we find ourselves in a fantastical other world of grey volcanic mountains, expansive plains and vast 'war games-style' armies we know we ought to prepare ourselves for a different experience.

The settings given to us during the openings to some films may leave us with more questions and not place us within a particular world with quite the same certainty. *Whale Rider* (Caro, 2002), for instance, cuts between two very distinct settings within the first few minutes: there is the relatively straightforward naturalism of the hospital maternity ward, but there is also the fantasy-style, other worldly, underwater space. Nevertheless, these settings have been carefully and appropriately chosen to set us up for what we should expect from the film.

KEY TERM

MISE EN SCÈNE This is a term that is borrowed from the theatre and really refers to staging, or 'putting on stage'. It sometimes helps to think of the elements that you can see in the staging of a play: a particular location will be suggested on the stage, characters will be dressed in particular ways, particular objects will be carried by characters or will be prominently placed on the stage, and the actors will be directed to move or perform in particular ways. These theatrical elements are the sub-section parts of the cinematic term; and this effectively reminds us of the way in which the theatre is a key element of film's cultural and artistic origins.

Lighting (including the use of areas of darkness or shadow) will also be part of any theatre performance and is often also classified as part of a film's mise en scène since its effects can clearly be seen 'within the frame'. However, this aspect of film construction also links into cinematography (or the use of the camera). (Even those of us who have only taken holiday snaps will know the extent to which the correct lighting determines the success or failure of any photographic effort.)

And this way in which lighting in effect straddles both mise en scène and cinematography helps to alert us to something very useful: the demarcations we are dealing with here are essentially no more than a convenient device for helping

us to gain an overall understanding of the range of techniques available to filmmakers for the creation of meaning.

In a somewhat similar way, sound effects (to say nothing of the words themselves) will also be an important part of the total effect created on the audience in a theatre, but here with respect to film we are dealing with these elements under the heading of 'sound'.

MISE EN SCÈNE: PERFORMANCE AND MOVEMENT

As with setting, the performance and movement of the actors (also part of mise en scène) can operate in similar ways to suggest possibilities for how we might understand given characters and relationships between characters. Characters sitting with their backs to each other present a certain sense of relationship, while characters moving towards each other and embracing clearly present a different sense of relationship. This much is obvious, but within the performance and movement between any two characters there is, of course, a limitless range of possible permutations.

KEY TERM

PERFORMANCE AND MOVEMENT This refers to the acting that is taking place but the phrase also helps to define a little more clearly what it is we should be looking for: there is a performance going on and essentially it revolves around movement. These movements can range from the miniscule to the expansive, and can involve the whole body or the smallest parts of the body. Everything is included from slow movements of the eye to sudden running and jumping, and each can be 'read' in some way (or several possible ways).

Body language

We need to be alert to the subtleties of such interactions, bearing in mind that each movement and gesture will have been decided upon in order to convey some meaning. Interactive movements involving two or more characters will have been carefully choreographed with attention to the details of body language that is designed to communicate a sense of character and/or character relationships to us, the audience. Once again, as with all aspects of film construction, choices will have been made for particular reasons by those involved in the creative process and we need to ask ourselves why those particular choices might have been made. Often the reason becomes clear upon simple reflection. When in *A Hard Day's Night* (Lester, 1964) (see FS3 British and Irish Cinema – the Swinging Sixties) the Beatles find their way out through a fire escape and free themselves from the various entrapping room spaces in which they have previously found themselves the resulting change in their movements

is clear; they cavort wildly through the open, outside space, running, jumping and extending limbs in all directions. (And, lest we should miss the point being made through performance, Richard Lester uses fast motion to bring further attention to the sudden change.) The idea behind the exaggerated change of movement is obvious. They have found a momentary escape from a confined existence, but it can be easily missed if we neglect the active thinking interaction with the screen images that is vital for Film Studies.

The range of body codes

Actors are able to generate audience response to their performance in a whole range of subtle ways. A range of ten body codes has been identified:

- direct bodily contact;
- the proximity of one character to another (or proxemics);
- the orientation of one to another i.e. the extent to which characters stand with their bodies turned towards or away from each other;
- general appearance e.g. tall and thin, or short and fat;
- head movements e.g. nodding or shaking of the head;
- facial expressions;
- gestures (or kinesics);
- body posture;
- eye movement or contact;
- aspects of speech, such as pitch, stress, tone, volume, accent, speech errors (all of which are termed paralinguistic codes).

(Argyle quoted in Hinde 1972 and Fiske 1982)

You do not need to memorize these ten body codes, nor do you need to use any of the jargon associated with this list such as 'proxemics' and 'kinesics'. It is useful, however, to have a series of areas such as eye movement, body posture, facial expressions, and so on to look out for as you are watching the performance of any particular actor.

Performance and movement in *Seven*

It is only when you look closely at actual examples of screen acting that you begin to realize the ways in which all these elements can be employed. There are, of course, countless examples that would serve to display a range of these elements of performance; but to take one example consider *Seven* (Fincher, 1995). In this film there is a scene in which Morgan Freeman and Brad Pitt (playing two detectives who do not get on well) are together in the confined space of an office that Pitt's character is about to take over from Freeman's older character who is leaving the force. While they are cramped together in what is a small space made all the more uncomfortable by the fact that they do not really like each other (note the use of setting for a specific reason again) they receive a phone call from Pitt's wife.

ACTIVITY . . .

- If possible, watch this scene several times; and as you do consider:
  - the different ways in which the actors' bodies are orientated in relation to each other;
  - the body postures adopted by both;
  - the facial expressions used by the actors;
  - any changes in speech patterns they employ;
  - the timing required for the delivery of the lines.
- Note your thoughts on each of these points before discussing your ideas with a few other people.

By way of contrast, in the same film you could consider the lines delivered in the grey, box-like space of the police interview room by the man from the brothel who has just been forced to commit the 'lust' murder. This is delivered in close-up but notice how the body posture remains important (and how the use of clothing in the shape of the white towel works to frame our attention on his face). Each movement of the facial muscles is intimately linked to movements of the eyes and to the carefully timed rising and falling voice pattern used to deliver the lines themselves.

ACTIVITY . . .

Watch this second scene several times now; and as you do so consider the ways in which each of Arygle's suggested ten body codes are being employed by the actor.

ACTIVITY . . .

Choose one of the two scenes from *Seven* mentioned above and write a 600-word analysis of the way in which the acting performance is used to convey meanings to the audience and/or to generate particular emotional responses in the audience.

You should work hard here to achieve as microscopic attention to detail as possible. Michael Caine has said film acting is all to do with the eyes: prolonged looks or minute glances towards or away from some object or person can convey (obviously with the assistance of the camera) so much meaning. Again, we have a connection with the theatre but also a difference: through the use of the camera, film is able to give the spectator a privileged close-up perspective on characters

continued

and events that is not available to either the theatre director or the theatre audience to use. Through the choice of particular shots film is able to emphasize minute details of body language.

Again, what we find is that the demarcations we are setting up in order to help to give us a basis for film analysis are in practice false: we are attempting to deal with performance and movement as a distinct area of film construction but in reality it is intimately connected to camerawork, shot choice and composition, and the editing (or ordering) of shots.

To further illustrate the point being made above, watch the scene in *Seven* in which in the face of opposition from Freeman's character, Pitt as Mills asks the police chief to be allowed to take over the whole case himself. Both his language and his gestures are brash and expansive but this air of confidence is reinforced by the use of low angle camera shots. Then, by contrast, when next morning Mills is given his own case involving the murder of a district attorney we are given an image of someone who is nervous and uncertain of his abilities. This is shown through Pitt's performance especially the way in which he folds his arm across the top of his head to reveal an almost childlike vulnerability. But notice that this gesture is highlighted for us by the use of a close-up and our interpretation is further aided by the use of point of view sound as Pitt's character enters the building that is used to give a sense of the isolation and pressure he is feeling. It is Pitt's performance that gives us an understanding of his character as someone who displays confidence but is in reality much more fragile and vulnerable, but it is his performance in conjunction with the use of camerawork, sound and editing (the juxtaposition of these two contrasting scenes) that is really at work here.

ACTIVITY . . .

1. Find two examples of your own that seem to you to show effective acting; one of a single character on her own in front of the camera and the second of two actors working together.
2. Bring your examples to show to other members of the class. Screen your clips for a small group and talk them through your chosen performances pointing out how various effects are being achieved. (Make sure you also try to consider ways in which the camera and the editing process could be said to be working with the actors to achieve particular effects.)
3. Working in the same groups choose one example from those that were screened showing two actors working together and attempt to recreate this scene with two members of the group taking on the required roles.
4. If possible, use a camera to record the scene using the same shots as in the original. Edit your film and then play the scene back to compare your version

with the original. (In order to do this you might need to storyboard the scene in an effort to get it as close to the original as possible. You should find that the planning that is inevitably involved in the storyboarding process will save time in the long run and enable you to be more accurate in what you are trying to achieve. You might even like to have one group storyboarding and another trying to complete the task without going through this stage in order to enable you to compare and discuss the results.)

MISE EN SCÈNE: COSTUME AND PROPS

Allied to the performance and movement of the actors, and still within the overall area of mise en scène, are considerations by the filmmakers regarding costume to be worn and props to be placed within a setting or used by a particular character. So, for instance, again taking *Seven* as an example, notice the way in which the two detectives Mills and Somerset are dressed differently right from the start of this film. What do the differences in costume tell us about the two men? (You might also be interested in the way in which in the same film the 'baddie', John Doe (Kevin Spacey), is sometimes shown as being dressed in a similar way to Somerset – that is in a dark hat and long cloak-like coat. Why has this been done? Does it suggest something about these two characters, and if so, what?)

In order to consider the differences between Mills and Somerset, you could look at the scenes in which we are shown the two cops dressing to get ready to go to work. If you do this, notice that it is not simply a question of the types of costume or props being employed but also the nature of the way in which the two actors perform the actions of putting on particular items or laying out particular items to be used. When we are shown Somerset getting dressed by methodically laying out items of clothing and picking up a series of again carefully laid out objects to put in his pockets we immediately know something of his personality and character.

So, in trying to consider props we again notice that our convenient demarcations between elements of film construction do not really hold up when we begin to analyse any given film clip. It is the relationship between objects in the scenes discussed above and the performances of the actors (highlighted and brought to our attention by editing and camerawork, notice) that creates meaning.

KEY TERM

COSTUME AND PROPS This refers to items of clothing being worn by characters and objects seen within any given setting. At its simplest, costume clearly acts as a type of uniform, linking a character to a particular group and often to a rank or position within that group. But costume can also 'announce' a character, giving an insight into what this person is supposed to be like, for instance shy or flamboyant. At their simplest, props work to give an authentic sense of place, but can also be used in more complex ways to suggest important characteristics of particular individuals or even key themes for the whole film.

Dress code and character

It has often been pointed out that, when Joan Crawford taking the title role in *Mildred Pierce* (Curtiz, 1945) changes her clothes from stereotypical suburban housewife attire centring on an apron to power-dressing businesswoman-style suits, an important indication of her personal transformation of character is being presented to us. A similar alteration to character (although with vastly different outcomes) occurs in *The Crying Game* (Jordan, 1992) (this film could be considered further under FS3 British and Irish Cinema – Passions and Repressions/Social and Political Conflict) in which the IRA operative, Jude (Miranda Richardson), adjusts her persona markedly from the first half of the film to the second and signals this change by a distinctive change of dress. In other words, costume has always been important in helping to create meaning for the viewer. In *East is East* (O'Donnell, 1999) (see FS3 British Cinema – Comedy) our awareness of Nazir's change of lifestyle and assertion of his sexuality is reinforced for us by his new-found dress sense when he moves to Manchester.

Figure 1.1 *Jude (Miranda Richardson) in The Crying Game*
Source: C4 / RGA

NOTEBOX . . .

In fact, the example involving the film *Mildred Pierce* given above has been used far too often according to some film examiners and usually with little real understanding of the film. So, important point: make sure you try to come up with your own examples for as many of the general ideas being given here as possible.

Take away with you the general points that are being made in any film textbooks and then make sure you try to apply the ideas to films you know. In this way you will gain a much better understanding of the concept itself and have at your disposal an example that is fresh and exciting instead of stale and overused.

Props and character

As regards props, consider the way in which books are used in relation to Mills and Somerset. Where Somerset studies the original texts in the calm academic environment of a library in order to try to understand the killer, Mills tries to read student guides to the texts but finds even these to be hard work. Or, consider the way that whenever he cannot sleep Somerset throws a flick-knife at a dartboard. What does that suggest about his character because it certainly seems to add some sort of complication to our understanding of him as the orderly, emotionally controlled, academically minded cop?

In a similar way, as Norman Bates leads Marion Crane into his parlour behind the reception area of the Bates Motel in *Psycho* (Hitchcock, 1960) we cannot avoid noticing the stuffed birds. There is the predatory owl in mid-swoop and then the ominously sharp beaked shadow of a crow, a harbinger of death. Nor should we miss in this scene the paintings of classical nudes on the walls: the female body displayed in all its naked vulnerability before the essentially male gaze. For the purposes of Film Studies we have to be intensely aware of all of this in an analytical fashion that is going to enable us to decide exactly how meaning is being created for us as members of the audience.

Props as symbols

In this way props or costume items can take on considerable significance for the whole film; they can in effect become symbols for some key idea or concept. In *On the Waterfront* (Kazan, 1954) when the first person willing to speak out against the corruption in the docks is murdered, his jacket is symbolically passed on to the next person willing to do the same and ultimately to the hero, Terry (Marlon Brando). In effect, what is seen within the film as the mantle of truth and justice is being passed from one to another. Similarly, in *East is East*, Sanjid's parka, standing perhaps for an attempt by the character to shield himself from the pain of the world around him, has the hood accidentally but highly symbolically ripped off towards the end of the film. In *La Haine* (Kassowitz, 1995) (this film could be considered further under FS5 Studies in World Cinema – Single Study Films) the key prop of the gun is symbolically handed over to Hubert by Vinz

towards the end of the film in acknowledgment of the fact that he has learnt something important both about himself and about the reality of gunplay. Once again, the prop takes on a role and significance within the film over and above its mere presence as a material object.

ACTIVITY . . .

Watch the library scene from *Seven* or a scene from a film of your own choice (or if you like, the parlour scene from *Psycho*) and write an analysis of the ways in which props are used to assist in the creation of certain potential meanings for us as spectators (500 words).

CINEMATOGRAPHY: COLOUR

One of the key points to recognise as a Film Studies student is the way in which as spectators of film our reading (or interpretation) of one strand of film construction such as performance and movement, or costume and props, can be influenced or reinforced by the filmmaker's use of further elements of visual language. The cinematographer's choice (made in conjunction with others) of lighting and colour, for example, can clearly affect the 'look' of the film as a whole but can also influence our understanding of individual scenes.

KEY TERM

COLOUR This can be used in highly artificial ways for particular expressive purposes as in the make-up employed by the changed Jude in *The Crying Game*, for instance, (where it would seem to perhaps suggest the danger of a femme fatale) or it can be employed in an effort to achieve naturalism by re-creating the colours of the real world.

Black and white

The fundamental choice of colour or black and white may often be an economic decision but it may also be a more creative one: consider the use of black and white in *Raging Bull* (Scorsese, 1980) which looks back to boxing in the postwar period, or *Schindler's List* (Spielberg, 1993) in which the story is set amidst the horrors of the Holocaust.

When watching *Seven* there are many scenes where you almost have to remind yourself that this is a colour film; greys and 'washed out' colours almost totally predominate in order to give a sense of this bleak, murky urban landscape. In the case of *La Haine* which looks at confrontations between the police and young people in and around Paris in the mid-1990s, a very deliberate creative choice has been made to screen this film

in black and white. The question we must ask ourselves is why this might have been done. How might this have been considered appropriate or 'correct' for the film? There will be a range of possible answers but the key point is that we must ourselves ask the question.

NOTEBOX . . .

Spielberg's brilliant decision to film *Schindler's List* in black and white is a key ingredient in the movie's aesthetic success. . . . The lack of colour allows Spielberg to be explicit without becoming tastelessly graphic.

Spielberg's black and white also achieves a number of other coherent aesthetic objectives. It echoes newsreels and documentaries of the Holocaust made at the time, thus establishing historical context and a feeling of authenticity.

Alan A. Stone, 'Spielberg's Success', *Boston Review* (www.bostonreview.net)

ACTIVITY . . .

1. If possible, look at relevant extracts from some of these films and decide why you believe black and white might have been used on each occasion. As usual, if possible, it would be good to try to compare your ideas with those of others.
2. Choose a film you know that seems to use colour in an interesting way and pick an extract that seems to demonstrate an especially good example of the way in which colour works in this film.
3. Think about how you feel colour is contributing to creating meaning and generating audience response in your film extract. If possible discuss your ideas with others.

Colour

Most obviously colour as with bright lighting simply gives pleasure to the audience. Film literally can bring light and colour into our lives. Particular colours or tints can also be used to suggest (often through their association with the colours of the natural world) warmth or coldness, or particular seasons, or emotions. They can also be used symbolically, as for example in the use of red to suggest blood and danger, or passion and lust. One way to make this clear would be to consider the way in which colour is used in *Seven*. Look at the scenes in the brothel, the interview room and the library. Decide the dominant colours in each and ask yourself why each has been chosen.

CINEMATOGRAPHY: LIGHTING

In terms of the lighting for a film the fundamental choice is obviously whether to use natural lighting or not (i.e. whether to film outside or in the studio), but in reality even natural lighting will usually be supplemented by lights set up by the film crew. The use of relatively bright lighting sources (high key lighting) as used in perhaps romantic comedies suggests a certain atmosphere or attitude to life that is distinctly different from that set up by the relatively dark lighting (low key lighting) used in film noir, or a neo-noir like *Seven*. Similarly, hard light that is created by a narrow, intense beam of light and gives sharp-edged objects and shadows sets up a distinctly different mood than the soft lighting that is created by a broad, more diffuse beam that gives soft-edged objects and shadows.

Possible sources of light

Lights can be placed anywhere around, above or below the object being photographed. Consider a face lit from the front (front lighting), compared with a face lit from behind (back lighting), or from the side (side lighting), or from above (overhead lighting), or from below. Each will obviously create a different image and within the context of the particular film suggest something about the character being lit in this way. Overhead lighting for example can be used to cast heavy shadows, conceal the eyes and create an image of a face that is mysterious, sinister, perhaps conveying danger (a classic example of this would be some of the shots of John Wayne's character, Ethan Edwards, in *The Searchers* (Ford, 1956) with the shadow of the brim of his hat putting his eyes in deep shadow). Or, sometimes the left or right half of a character's face may be lit while the other half remains in shadow, perhaps again suggesting a person with darker and lighter aspects to their character. This is the case when we encounter the Daniel Day-Lewis character, Johnny, with the other members of his British National Party gang beneath the railway line in *My Beautiful Laundrette* (Frears, 1985).

ACTIVITY . . .

- Working on your own or with one or two others, find a range of shots that light faces in interesting and perhaps distinctive ways.
- Try to decide how you think the lights must have been arranged to create the shots you have found. You might like to experiment with lighting arrangements to see if you can re-create the type of shots you have been considering. (Your equipment does not need to be sophisticated: simple torches will suffice to give some sense of the possibilities for casting shadows on the face.)

Lighting from below challenges the viewer by reversing all our usual expectations for lighting, which derive from the positioning of the sun overhead; we are used to facial shadows falling in a certain way and when this norm is disrupted we are disorientated

finding that with which we are confronted to be strange and otherworldly. As with colour, lighting can be used in highly contrived, artificial ways to achieve particular purposes or in naturalistic ways in order to achieve in some sense a replication of the real world.

ACTIVITY . . .

If possible, discuss with other people the ways in which you believe lighting has been used for particular purposes in any films you have seen recently. Try to talk as accurately as possible about specific scenes in specific films.

KEY TERM

LIGHTING This refers to the various ways in which the light whether in the studio or on location is controlled and manipulated in order to achieve the 'look' desired for a particular shot or scene.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Choose one film that you know well that seems to you to use lighting in an interesting way and pick an extract that seems to demonstrate an especially good example of the way in which lighting works in this film.
- If possible, show your chosen extracts to others and explain in as much detail as possible how you feel lighting is contributing to creating meaning and generating audience response in your film extract.

(In order to make a good job of this you will need to practise your delivery. You are not aiming to give an in-depth talk but you should still attempt to be as professional as possible.)

Conventional lighting norms

Most often in the filming of a commercial film a combination of lighting positions will be used around the main subject. This will conventionally involve a key light (usually on an arc 45 degrees either side of the camera), a fill light (giving softer lighting from the opposite side of the camera to the key light) and a back light (making the subject stand out from the background). But these are only general positions; more lights can be added or lights can be taken away. The angle at which any light is positioned in relation to either camera or subject can (obviously) be varied, and there is a choice of hard or soft lighting that is available for each lighting position. All of which begins to make it clear why the work of cinematographers has often been referred to as 'painting

with light'. (This is a key phrase in the highly recommended film *Visions of Light* (Glassman, McCarthy and Samuels, 1992) which looks back at key cinematographers in Hollywood.)

NOTEBOX . . .

As with every other aspect of film construction so far discussed, we again notice not only how extensive the range of choices available to filmmakers is but also how critical these choices are to the creation of a particular meaning, or range of potential meanings, for the spectator.

ACTIVITY . . .

1 Watch the scene in *Seven* where the detectives, Mills and Somerset, go down into the brothel to investigate the 'lust' murder. If possible, discuss in detail with others the ways in which light and colour have been used in this sequence.
2 Write a short piece (400–500 words) explaining the meanings you see as being created for the audience and the responses likely to be generated by the use of light and colour in this short sequence.

ACTIVITY . . .

1 If you have time, watch *Visions of Light*, stopping, rewinding and watching again any effects of cinematography that you find particularly interesting.
2 List interesting films (with dates), along with the cinematographers and directors who worked on them. What were the features of these films that made you see them as interesting in some way?
3 If possible, discuss the choices of interesting films you have made with other people who have looked at *Visions of Light*. When these other people watched the film did they identify the same clips, or different ones, as being especially interesting? Were you able to express clearly the reasons for each of your choices?

(The word 'interesting' has been used several times above. It is a vague word and usually you should expect to try to use language in as precise a way as possible. Try never to describe a film as simple 'good', or 'enjoyable', or even 'interesting', but instead always attempt to suggest why you found it to be any of these things. As always, 'why' is our key word: by referring to details of film construction you should try to identify exactly what it is about any film that makes it 'interesting' (or 'good' or 'enjoyable'). The usefulness of such a vague word as 'interesting' here is that it leaves it open for you to come up with your own ideas.)

CINEMATOGRAPHY: CAMERAWORK

All of the elements of construction so far considered can influence the way in which we 'read' the visuals being presented to us; but, in addition, the filmmaker also has within her control the manipulation of our physical point of view through camerawork. The filmmakers can put us into positions that are comfortable or uncomfortable, dominant or weak, simply by deciding on the positioning and movement of the camera.

If you have seen the well-known scene in *Reservoir Dogs* (Tarantino, 1991) in which the police officer has his ear sliced off, you may have noticed the way in which the camera as it were 'looks away' at the actual moment of the cutting almost as if the whole thing is too uncomfortable or painful to watch. If you have seen the interrogation scene in *La Haine* in which two police officers racially abuse and beat two of the central characters you may have noticed how, in contrast to *Reservoir Dogs*, a static camera is used, refusing us any respite from viewing what is going on. In this film the filmmakers deny us the potential relief of looking away and yet by refusing this possibility they in fact only highlight how much we would like to turn our heads. The point is that choices that are made about the use of the camera are often made in order to create particular effects on the audience.

KEY TERM

CAMERAWORK This clearly and quite simply refers to the work done with the camera in the making of a film. However, the possibilities open to the cinematographer are anything but simple. Fundamentally, the camera can be positioned at any distance from the subject being filmed and at any angle to that subject. It can be turned left or right to follow a subject within a horizontal plane, or tilted up or down to follow the same subject in a vertical plane. It can also be moved at any speed towards, away from or around the subject, and this movement can be as smooth or as shaky as the filmmakers decide. In addition, lenses can be used to give the appearance of movement towards or away from the subject at any speed, or to make the image of the subject either sharper or more indistinct, or even to alter the appearance of the subject in the style of a fairground 'hall of mirrors'.

The only limitation on the fluidity and mobility of the camerawork in any film is the availability of the necessary technology to enable the desired effect to be achieved; and, in general terms, camera and lens technology has developed throughout film history in such a way as to permit increasingly complex camerawork. So, for instance, new lightweight cameras (and sound recording gear) in the 1950s made it easier to take the equipment out on location.

However, what you will find if you get the chance to watch some clips from old silent films is that even from very early in film history cinematographers were devising imaginative ways of getting moving shots with these rather large, heavy wooden cameras. So, yes, available technology must to some extent impose

limitations upon what can be achieved, but often it is the creativity with which available technology is used that is of most interest.

(Please note: this is not to say simple camerawork is not possible, nor to suggest that simple camerawork cannot be at least as effective as complex permutations of distances, angles, movements and lens usage. Recall the example from *La Haine* given above.)

Distance and angle of shot

By varying the distance between the camera and the subject, the cinematographer can employ anything from an extreme long shot (ELS) (often used to establish the setting and then also known as an establishing shot), to an extreme close-up (ECU) closing in on just part of the face. In between there are possibilities for a long shot (LS) giving a full-length character shot, a medium shot (MS) giving half a standing character, and a close-up (CU) giving a head and shoulders shot (and obviously all sorts of further slight variations within this range of possibilities).

By varying the angle of shot the cinematographer can place the spectator in the position of looking down on or looking up at a character; alternatively, we can be positioned at eye level with a character in shot. If the editing suggests the camera is taking up the point of view of a particular character (a point of view shot, or POV) then again the angle can be used to create a particular impression of the character's situation. So, a low angle POV shot might suggest a character was being overpowered by whatever was towering over her.

Establishing shots

Usually you will find that each scene in a fictional narrative film uses an establishing shot; that is a shot that gives the setting in which the scene is to take place and enables the viewer to establish the spatial relationships between characters involved in the scene. But, although this is what might be known as the Hollywood standard and was certainly the expected norm throughout the period of Classical Hollywood, the practice of using an establishing shot has not always been followed by filmmakers. By omitting an establishing shot the viewer is put in the position of struggling to make sense of the relationship between the characters shown. We are effectively disorientated and this will be part of what the filmmakers are attempting to achieve; as well as perhaps defying the expected filmic norm and thereby challenging any presumption that there are certain correct (and therefore, certain incorrect) ways of making films.

ACTIVITY . . .

1 Choose a sequence from a film you know that seems to use camerawork in a significant way.
2 In small groups show your chosen sequences to each other and explain in as much detail as possible how you feel camerawork is being used to contribute to creating meaning and generating audience response in your chosen extracts.

(In doing this you should expect to refer to distances and angles of shot, and you might like to use diagrams (perhaps as handouts or on an overhead projector) to illustrate your points. As an alternative, you might like to use members of the group to take roles within your chosen film clip enabling you to move amongst them in order to demonstrate your understanding of how the camera has been used to film the sequence.)

Camera movement

The variations in terms of permutations of distance from subject and angle of shot are obviously endless; but in addition the cinematographer can also move the camera while taking the shot. This could involve panning to left or right to take in more of a scene or bring into view additional objects, or tilting up or down to create a similar effect. But it could also involve moving the whole camera along on a track (a tracking shot), or simply on wheels (a dolly shot), or even on a crane (a crane shot). And by using the lens on the camera the cinematographer can create further adjustments to the type of shot we see. She could zoom in to give more detail or out to take in more of the setting; or might adjust the lens to bring some objects more sharply into focus while leaving others blurred; or could employ deep focus to have objects from foreground to background all in acceptable focus. All sorts of combinations are obviously possible, so for example the camera could pan while tracking forward and rising up on a crane. Finally, shots could also be hand-held and therefore deliberately somewhat shaky.

If you watch *Bloody Sunday* (Greengrass, 2002) (see FS3 British Cinema – Social and Political Conflict) one of the first things that will strike you will probably be the distinctive use that is being made of the camera. We are familiar with shaky handheld camera effects from films like *The Blair Witch Project* (Myrick/Sanchez, 1999) and tend to associate it with low budget films. But what both of these films demonstrate is that these sorts of uses of the camera can be employed to create very particular atmospheres and involve the audience in the experience in very striking ways.

In both of these cases, you will probably be immediately aware that something different from what you are used to is being done with the camera. This highlights the fact that because we tend to be familiar with mainstream Hollywood films we do have certain expectations about how the camera will be used. Changes from the norm will be potentially challenging to us.

The extent of the range of camera possibilities

The important point, of course, is that if the cinematographer and director as a team are 'on top of their game' then each permutation of possibilities will be carefully chosen in an effort to achieve a particular desired effect whether in the creation of meaning or the generation of audience response. Consider the elaborate camera movement forming the opening to *Donnie Darko* (Kelly, 2001) in which the camera seems to track past half-lit undergrowth before moving towards the central character lying in the road and circling him. There is then a cut to what at first looks as if it might be a point of view shot panning across the early morning skyline before the character stands and emerges suddenly into the foreground of the shot, half turns towards the camera and seems to smile, almost laugh to himself. Why has this opening camera movement been chosen? How does it work to introduce the film and the central character, and in what ways is it appropriate for the film and the character? How does it contribute towards ensuring the opening engages our attention? Or, what about the opening to *Jackie Brown* (Tarantino, 1997), what sorts of camera movement are being used here? If you get a chance to look at this you will see the way in which the opening tracking shot has been complicated by having the central character standing on a moving walkway somewhat confusing our sense of movement. You will also see how a low camera angle has been used in places to perhaps give a sense of a strong individual. Consider all of this for yourself and ask the same three questions as for *Donnie Darko* above:

- Why has this opening camera movement been chosen and, how does it work to introduce the film and the central character?
- In what ways is it appropriate for the film and the character?
- How does it contribute towards ensuring the opening engages our attention?

There is much more that could be said about camerawork and many more terms that could be used, but the essential point to recognize is the range of possibilities that are open to the director/cinematographer. And also of course that every choice of position, movement, or lens will be made with the aim of creating some sort of impression on the spectator and generating some meaning. Film exists only in relation to those who are watching it. (This is a key point, perhaps the key point: do think about it carefully.)

NOTEBOX . . .

Be reassured that knowing all of the technical terms here is not what Film Studies is really essentially all about. The important thing is to respond thoughtfully to the way in which the camera is being used to create potential meanings for you as a reader. Try to work out what the filmmakers are attempting to get you to feel and think about. These are the important things. Asking yourself why this or that technique has been used, this is the crux of the matter. Knowing the technical terms simply allows you to describe in a succinct, shorthand fashion the effect within the film that you are attempting to focus upon.

ACTIVITY . . .

1 If possible, watch the opening to *Donnie Darko*, *Jackie Brown* and one other film of your choice.
2 Try to find time to discuss these scenes with other people, noting any particular aspects of camerawork you find interesting. Do not be afraid to play and replay these scenes as many times as necessary in order to try to see exactly how the camera is being used. You need to attempt to detach yourself from the narrative so that you are mentally in the position of watching over the shoulder of the cinematographer as the scene is being filmed.

NOTEBOX . . .

The skill mentioned above of being able to detach yourself from the film and imagine you are on location with the crew as they are filming is immensely useful for Film Studies. Essentially it involves the attempt to try to imagine just how the shots you are being given as a viewer of the film have been achieved.

EDITING

After the film has been shot in the camera it still of course has to be edited, and what you will have found whilst discussing camerawork is that it is actually almost impossible to talk about either of these two elements of film construction in isolation. Editing gives narrative shape and coherence to the array of shot sequences recorded by the camera(s). This part of the process involves hours of film that may have been taken being cut to what is as a matter of convention deemed to be an appropriate exhibition length: sometimes 90 minutes, usually around 120 minutes, and occasionally 150–80 minutes. As with much else connected with narrative film, these lengths seem to owe most to the traditional time spans allocated for theatre drama, and apart from that there seems little reason for the choice of time span.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Choose a sequence of film you know that seems to use editing in a significant way to create particular meanings for the audience.
- In small groups show your chosen sequences to each other and explain how you feel editing is being used to contribute towards creating meaning and generating audience response.

To use a long take, or a montage of shots

Editing has been seen by some to be a key defining feature of film. For some theorists the long take involving filming a lengthy sequence of events without cuts has been seen to be the essence of filmmaking allowing the spectator to follow a whole scene as a privileged 'presence'. (This idea was taken to its logical extreme in a film called *Russian Ark* (Sokurov, 2002) which was essentially one highly choreographed long take.) For others who have come up with theories about the best way to make films, cutting a variety of shots together in a montage that challenges the spectator to make meaning from perceived connections between the shots has been seen as the key to film-making. In practice most filmmakers recognizing that both cinematography and editing are useful tools of their trade have used a combination of these two possible extremes.

Case Study: *The Killing Fields* (1984)

(Director: Roland Joffe. Screenwriter: Bruce Robinson. Editor: Jim Clark. Cinematographer: Chris Menges. Music: Mike Oldfield. Cast: Sam Waterston (Sydney Schanberg), Dr Haing Ngor (Dith Pran), and John Malkovich (Al Rockoff).)

Camerawork and editing

There is an interesting scene in this film around the point where Pol Pot's rebel communist forces are entering the outskirts of Phnom Pen. The journalist, Sydney Schanberg, whose story we are following finds himself in a Coca-Cola warehouse and the 'camera-eye' (from a privileged viewer's position) becomes involved in trying to make sense of the situation. Initially it calmly surveys the scene taking in the irony of the expulsion of American influence from this country occurring in the midst of so much bottled essence of American Dream. As soon as the first explosion takes place, however, perhaps significantly shattering the fragile glass bottles, the camerawork becomes increasingly frantic and the editing from shot to shot much quicker. Thus the sudden confusion of the situation is reinforced and the spectator finds herself having to work at an increased pace to take in all the images being thrown in front of her. Images of Coca-Cola dispenser-machines and lorries (first of all relatively intact even if broken but later being blown up) continually intrude inter-cut with shots of child soldiers, lost or abandoned toddlers screaming, and cattle in their death throes. East and West are continually juxtaposed, the West in the shape of high-tech weapons and Coca-Cola and the East in the shape of a low-tech Cambodian bullock-cart way of life. Coca-Cola is the symbol, perhaps, of Western capitalism, the American way of life, multi-national globalization of trade, and American imperialism. We note the American soldier's introduction of himself as 'Made in the USA' as well as the way he enters at speed, in a jeep, sounding the horn. However, more powerfully than anything else because of the editing the spectator notices the presence of children in this

extract: this is an indictment of war, and of what war does to ordinary people and to children and the innocence of children. These children have guns instead of toys: see the carefully composed shot of the child-soldier firing above a dead child and the final shot of the child crying with his hands over his ears. Through the juxtaposition of a series of shots, additional meaning is produced (although the exact nature of that meaning is highly dependent upon the work being done in terms of interpretation by the viewer).

(Although this look at *The Killing Fields* has been sub-titled 'camerawork and editing' you will have noticed that the reality is that we cannot divorce these elements of film construction from mise en scène (setting, performance and movement, costume and props) and we certainly cannot divorce all of this from the way in which film continually works to create meaning for us.)

Editing tools and 'tricks'

Editors can use straight cuts so that we are instantaneously transported from one shot to another. Or they can use 'fades' where the shot fades out to a blank screen (and fades in to the next shot from a blank screen), or 'dissolves' where through superimposition one shot dissolves into another; or a range of other less used transitions. They can aim to maintain continuity through using cause and effect, ensuring each shot has a 'cause' in the previous shot and an 'effect' in the following shot. Or they can construct a discontinuous sequence that disorientates viewers and makes them 'work' to make sense of the series of images with which they are confronted. At all times the juxtaposition of shots will be vital to the creation of meaning with one shot in some way 'commenting on' or adjusting the potential meaning of the previous shot.

Editing and time

It is via editing that film is able to transport the spectator through space and time, allowing a flashback to a previous temporal and spatial dimension (and even flash forward to the future) to take place or permitting movement (cross-cutting) between parallel actions taking place contemporaneously. In *La Haine* the filmmakers need to show the boredom of everyday life for young unemployed people living in the working-class satellite towns around Paris: a single static shot of our three central characters sitting equidistant from each other in a bleak, waste area is held for some time and then a flash-forward edit is used to a shot of the same three characters in the same space but occupying slightly different positions within the frame. It is the combination of holding the initial shot for longer than we might normally expect and then using a distinctive editing cut that ensures the required meaning is conveyed clearly and effectively to the viewer.

SOUND

What we have considered so far in this chapter are those aspects of film construction dealing with the visual aspects of filmmaking, but there is of course a further obvious dimension to film, that of sound. This might be said to operate today on three levels; that is via dialogue, sound effects and musical accompaniment.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Find a scene in a film that you know where a range of types of sound seem to you to be used particularly effectively.
- In small groups screen your chosen scenes and explain why you think the filmmakers have chosen to use sound in these ways at this point in their film. In particular try to explain how you think the particular uses of sound found in your film extract contribute to meaning and enhance audience response.

The uses to which sound can be put range from merely enhancing a sense of realism to helping to suggest quite subtle aspects of character or theme. In a sequence from *Seven* mentioned earlier, the younger detective, Mills, is allocated his own murder case to work on after displaying great confidence in the police chief's office (low angle camera shots, for example, adding to a sense of his personal assurance in this scene). However, when he arrives at the scene of the murder and walks in, we follow him and the sound we are given is what might be described as 'point of view' sound, the indistinct, half-audible voices of those around him. It is this distinctive use of sound (added to several other aspects of film construction such as performance and editing) that gives the viewer the idea that Mills is in fact not as confident as his 'performance' in the police chief's office might have suggested.

NOTEBOX . . .

Silent cinema The period stretching from the start of cinema in the mid-1890s to about 1930 has come to be known as silent cinema; although, in fact, it was no such thing with live musical accompaniment being the order of the day from early on. In creative terms this music, provided by anything from a single piano to a larger array of instruments, added meaning by, for example, enhancing dramatic or romantic moments, and in practical terms it drowned out any accompanying mechanical noises from the projector.

Sound: dialogue

Clearly dialogue (which may include a narrator's voiceover) is now an important part of film and vital to our perception and understanding of the narrative. It makes a critical

contribution to the way in which we gauge who the characters are, what they are like, what they have done, what they are going to do and what their relationship might be to others in the film. But dialogue is also often critical in alerting us to any wider ideas or themes that might be dealt with by the film. So, in the extract considered above from *The Killing Fields*, although it was minimal, dialogue contributed to our awareness of the importance for the filmmakers of the theme of American imperialism and globalization of trade, with the American officer using the very distinctive phrase 'made in the USA' to describe himself. In *La Haine* the word 'killer' comes back time and again, particularly as a way of describing the punch-line to a story, and in the light of the film's ending this usage takes on a special resonance.

Sound: sound effects

In addition to dialogue there are also sound effects. These can be used simply to enhance a realistic sense of place as in the use of traffic noise for a city street setting. However, they may move beyond this and work to engage heightened audience response and expectation as in the sound of the kitchen knife being drawn from its holder in the opening to *Scream* (Craven, 1996). Or, to return to our traffic noise, look at *Seven* to see how the noise of the city as this oppressive, intrusive presence is always there in the background. In *La Haine* you will find that the sound of the metro train running on its tracks which might be seen simply to add to a sense of realism is in fact also used at the start of the final sequence to echo what is perhaps the key recurring sound effect in the film, that of a clock ticking.

Sound: background music

There is also the possibility of using background music that does not arise realistically out of the imagined world on screen to give a sense of mood or atmosphere. If you ever have people suggesting film is a naturalistic medium you could alert them to this sort of use of music in film. (Where are the violins, is it just me who is not hearing them!) And, it is important to remember of course that silence, the absence of sound, can be used just as effectively (sometimes more effectively) to create audience engagement.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Find a scene in a film that you know where silence seems to be used particularly effectively.
- In small groups screen your chosen scenes and explain why you think the filmmakers have chosen to use silence at this point in their film and how you think it contributes to meaning and enhances audience response.

FILM FORM: OVERVIEW

Filmmakers use a vast array of strategies for communicating ideas and/or emotions. These revolve around the use of various settings, the presentation of character, the application of a range of camera techniques, the editing of shots into particular scenes and sequences, and the use of sound. Each of these strategies is used to influence our perception of events as shown and deliberately suggest ways of making sense of any film. Awareness of the techniques being used and careful consideration of the effects that might be achieved by the application of these techniques is perhaps the fundamental skill required by anyone wishing to study film since it enables us to either accept or reject the suggested meanings that seem to be on offer.

ACTIVITY . . .

1. Watch the whole of any film mentioned earlier in this chapter; and then, with a group of others if possible, choose one sequence of no more than seven minutes to analyse in detail.
2. Spend time as a group discussing how your chosen sequence works in terms of its use of mise en scène, cinematography, editing and sound.
3. Individually write a commentary (1,000–1,200 words) discussing the ways in which one or two of these areas of film construction work to create meaning and generate audience response in your chosen sequence. Give your piece of writing a title in the form of a question:

How do mise en scène and/or cinematography and/or sound and/or editing work to create meaning and generate audience response in the (name or timing of scene) scene in (name of film)?

Case Study: *Orphans* (1999)

(*Director*: Peter Mullan. *Producer*: Frances Higson. *Scriptwriter*: Peter Mullan. *Cast*: Michael (Douglas Henshall); Thomas (Gary Lewis); John (Stephen Cole); Sheila (Rosemarie Stevenson); Tanga (Frank Gallagher).)

This film is a focus film for the section on Scottish cinema in the WJEC exam on British and Irish cinema. The opening sequence offers an interesting contrast in camera movement and carefully directed understated performances from the actors.

In the initial shot we are shown a series of objects before a hand comes in from the right to pick up a pair of scissors. In film terminology this is an example of props being used for particular effects. What is our reaction to each of these items and how does starting like this make the spectator feel? Is the response different

on a first viewing compared with subsequent viewings, and if so how? There are a lot of items here. Make sure you identify each of them and consider their significance.

It is only after this series of shots that there is a cut to a shot of the room in which these objects are to be found and we gain some impression of the four main characters. How do we view these characters in relation to the previous panning shot of the objects? In other words, how does this cut work? What response does it gain from the audience? Again, does our understanding change or develop on subsequent viewings, and if so in what way(s)? How do we initially respond to each of the main characters and what is it about them that makes us respond in this way? Notice at this point the role that casting might be said to play in the process of creating meaning and how important dress, appearance, body language and the smallest of movements can be in creating understanding.

How does camera movement contribute to creating meaning at this stage? How would you describe the camera movement and how does it make the audience feel? What is the effect on the audience of the central prop in the room and how is the camera movement appropriate for a scene involving this sort of prop? How do we feel as the scissors are passed round? How does each character use the scissors and what does this tell us about each? At each point notice the responses of the other actors as well as the particular character with the scissors. In what order are the scissors passed around and why?

When the haircutting is over how do we respond to Sheila's request to kiss her mother and the way in which Michael and John lift Sheila? How do we feel as an audience at this point? (Remember that we could feel several emotions at any one point in a film and that it is even possible that these emotions could be contradictory.) How are the ways in which each of the characters performs the kissing individualized? What about the things each character has to say during this time round the coffin? How are the lines both in terms of content and delivery appropriate for each character? What other sounds apart from the characters talking are used in this scene, and why?

When we move to the next shots of the box, how do we feel as an audience, and why do we feel this? Then, when we cut to the four siblings again, how are they arranged in relation to each other and in what ways might this be significant? How would you describe the camera movement at this point and in what way could it be considered as appropriate and contributing meaning to the scene? How does sound now begin to work? How would you describe the following elaborate camera movement and why has it been chosen? How do the colours change at this point and why has the change been chosen by the filmmakers? How do the colours used at this point contrast with the earlier shots around the coffin? In what ways are the mother's words and the setting given to this flashback scene appropriate? What other sounds can you hear in the scene and why have they been chosen?

Using the notes you have made in response to these questions write an analysis of the ways in which film language creates meaning in the opening sequence of *Orphans* (1,000–1,500 words).

CONCLUSION

- A film is constructed from the mise en scène, cinematography, editing and sound.
- The possible combinations of these elements available to filmmakers are endless.
- In analysing film we can dissect these chosen uses to understand how meaning is created in film.

FURTHER READING

Bordwell, D. and Thompson, K. (2000) *Film Art: An Introduction*, New York: McGraw Hill (Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8).

Lacey, N. (2005) *Introduction to Film*, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan (Chapter 1).

Nelmes, Jill (ed.) (2003) *An Introduction to Film Studies*, London: Routledge (Chapter 4).

Phillips, W.H. (2005) *Film: An Introduction*, 3rd edn, Boston: Bedford/St Martin's (Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4).

Roberts, G. and Wallis, H. (2001) *Introducing Film*, London: Arnold (Chapters 1, 2 and 3).

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.bfi.org.uk

www.filmeducation.org

2 NARRATIVE

Aren't all films just stories? What is narrative structure?

This chapter:

- explains the terms 'narrative' and 'narrative structure';
- examines the role of the narrator;
- explores the importance of stories in our everyday life;
- outlines the expected or common features of stories;
- considers ways in which we as viewers read film.

NOTEBOX . . .

This chapter will be directly relevant to the section on film form in FS1 – Film: Making Meaning 1 of the WJEC's AS in Film Studies and will help to form part of the necessary underpinning knowledge for one of the two required pieces of analytical coursework.

FILMS MENTIONED

If you are working your way through the whole or parts of this chapter you will find it useful to have watched *Seven* (Fincher, 1995) and perhaps *Run Lola Run* (Tykwer, 1999), and helpful to have access to scenes, clips and single shots from at least some of the following films:

- *Pulp Fiction* (Tarantino, 1994)
- *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (Ritchie, 1998)
- *Lord of the Rings: the Fellowship of the Ring* (Jackson, 2001)
- *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (Newell, 1994)
- *Casablanca* (Curtiz, 1942)
- *High Noon* (Zinnemann, 1952)
- *Billy Elliot* (Daldry, 2000)

- *La Haine* (Kassowitz, 1995)
- *Ratcatcher* (Ramsey, 1999)
- *The Matrix* (Wachowski, 1999)
- *Donnie Darko* (Kelly, 2001)
- *Strike* (Eisenstein, 1924)
- *Moulin Rouge* (Luhrmann, 2001).

ACTIVITY . . .

1 Summarise in 100–200 words the story of any film you have seen recently. Make sure you mention each of the central characters succinctly and that you give a clear sense of the beginning, middle and end of the story.

2 Exchange your synopsis with someone else, if possible, and read each other's. Discuss the two pieces of work looking for differences and similarities of approach. Which one strikes you on a first impression as telling the story more effectively? What are the features of this piece of writing that seem to make it an effective re-telling of the film's storyline? Does it follow a logical order? Is it using shorter, sharper sentences conveying information in a simple, straightforward way?

(The skill of being able to re-tell the central narrative for a film in just a few hundred words will be necessary when you take on your third piece of coursework, completing the storyboard or screenplay for a short scene within an imagined film.)

NARRATIVE

Usually, although not always (we could consider documentaries, for example) our concern in studying film will be with works of fiction, narratives with characters and a setting that are told to us in some way and claim in some way to represent the world to us. Given that this is the case we are going to need to consider the fundamental nature of narratives, or stories, and the role and use to which they are put within human society.

To begin with, it might be worth noting that narrative seems to be integral to human experience of the world. We constantly use stories (and it seems we have always done so) to make sense of and to create meaning out of our otherwise chaotic experiences. In telling stories we give order and shape to a series of events.

ACTIVITY . . .

- In pairs tell each other the story of your life. (Before you do this you will need to plan it a little: write down the things you want to tell the other person and put them into an order you think is suitable and effective. You should only tell your stories to each other when you are absolutely sure you have shaped them as you want to.)
- Remember things like the need to immediately engage the interest of the person to whom you are telling your story, the importance of retaining that person's attention and the need to put things into an order that will enable the listener to make sense of what has happened to you during your life. (Notice as well that you have only been asked to tell the other person things you want to let them know.)
- One final condition: there is a time limit of ten minutes on the length of your story. (Notice there seems to be some unwritten rule about the length of films you watch in the cinema: they almost always seem to run from 90 to 120 minutes. Why is this? What factors could have determined this length?)

Narrative structure

Narratives can be seen as particular arrangements of events within a structure. This structure may be the simplest one of relating events in chronological order, or it might be more complex. It could, for instance, involve the use of parallel episodes that form a deliberate contrast to each other, or the repetition of events seen from different perspectives, or the integration of symbolic events or images used in order to create significance.

KEY TERM

PARALLEL EDITING This refers to moving back and forth between two or more narrative lines of action supposedly occurring at the same time.

If there is no apparent relation between the events in a film, it is without plot (that is there is no sense of a controlling order having been imposed on events) and it may be that what is being represented to us is the chaotic nature of human experience, or a lack of meaning in the universe. (Or perhaps we are dealing with a surrealist who aims to delve into the unconscious or the subconscious.) But such lack of structure is extremely rare, and not something that will be found in mainstream cinema. The very nature of storytelling is essentially that of giving order to events.

Even if the structure is extremely complex involving unexpected time-shifts and demanding that the viewer should keep elements of the story on hold until the bigger picture becomes clearer (think of Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* (1994), for example, if you know it), order and shape will eventually be found. Indeed, the sense of achievement that

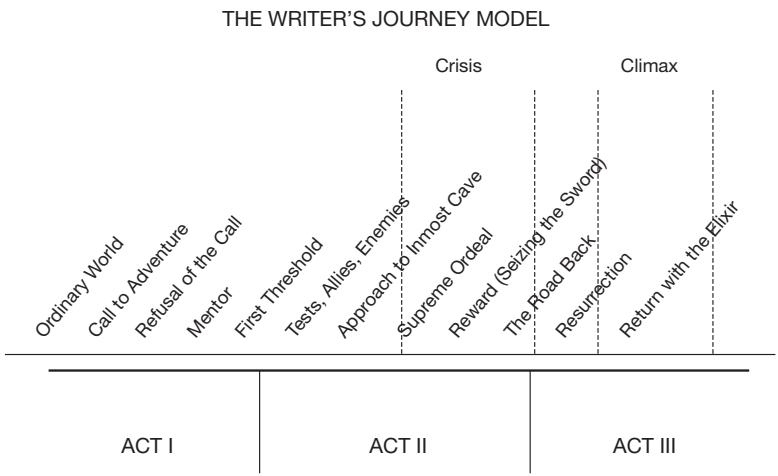


Figure 2.1 *The Writer's Journey Model*
Source: Provided courtesy of Michael Wiese Productions, www.mwp.com

comes from eventually recognizing and understanding the shape and form of the narrative is one of the pleasures offered by film. Through narrative we are reassured that any events that may happen are not random, and that the world we face is not a place of chaos but one of order.

NOTEBOX...

How did you structure your story when you told it to your partner? How did you choose the order in which to relate events? Which events did you choose to include and why? Which events did you leave out and why? What effect did the time limit have on your choices?

However you chose to do this, you will have been making choices in order to give structure i.e. shape and significance to the random, chaotic ongoing stream of events that have actually been the reality of your life.

The role of the narrator

Narration requires a narrator, someone (or more than one person) who tells the story. If you watch the opening to two films as different as *Lord of the Rings: the Fellowship of the Ring* (Jackson, 2001) and *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (Ritchie, 1998) you will find both use the device of having a formal narrator's voice. However, often the narrator's

role is in effect fulfilled by the filmmakers who position themselves outside the story and decide what to include, what not to include and the order in which to place events. It is they who are narrating the story for us, but we will usually be barely aware of the filmmakers' presence as narrator.

If, as with *Fellowship of the Ring* and *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, the device of a narrator as a character or presence within the film itself is used, it may be more obvious that the narrator has a particular perspective on events. If such a narrator is also a character within the story it will be clear that this person will see things from a certain perspective and will have their own relationship to events and characters. If an internal narrator is positioned outside of the main story and appears to be telling us what happened in an apparently objective way he may be reliable or he may be unreliable. The key point is that as readers of films we always need to ask ourselves who the narrator might be, what he can know and cannot know about events within the narrative, and what his or her perspectives might be on any narrative event. For example, consider again the ending to *Seven*. Why have the filmmakers decided to use Somerset's voiceover narration at this point?

ACTIVITY . . .

- Try to find a contemporary film of your own choice that uses a narrator. What is her/his relationship to events shown in the story and how reliable a narrator should we take her/him to be? Are we expected to unquestioningly adopt her/his perspective on events, and if so should we be happy to do so?
- How difficult is it to adopt a perspective outside of this narrator's viewpoint? If it is difficult, what makes it hard to achieve?
- Explain your film's use of a narrator (or narrators) to other people in a group, but only after you are absolutely clear as to your answers to the questions above. Do people who know the film agree with your analysis? If not, what did they disagree with you about?

PLOT STRUCTURE

The story is the basic chronological order of events: the plot is the rearranged, highly selected chain of events in the film that has been given its own internal logic. By using narrative's ability to move backwards and forwards through time and space and rearranging the elements of simple stories, let's say 'Little Red Riding Hood' or 'Cinderella', we can create individual plot arrangements of the basic story events.

For example, we could start our story of Cinderella at the ball or our story of Little Red Riding Hood at the point at which she is about to be eaten and then in both cases use flashback sequences to tell the story. In fact, we could start our narrative at any point within the chronology of the story that we chose. But what will always happen in a mainstream cinema narrative is that the plot will consist of a cause-and-effect flow of

actions. You should be able to take any film and see how the sequence of events has been rearranged into a particular cause-and-effect chain.

Case Study: *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994)

(Director: Mike Newell. Scriptwriter: Richard Curtis. Cast: Charles (Hugh Grant); Carrie (Andie MacDowell); Tom (James Fleet); Gareth (Simon Callow); Matthew (John Hannah); Fiona (Kristin Scott Thomas); David (David Bower); Scarlett (Charlotte Coleman).)

This film would seem to be at least to some extent an exception to the rule in that it is almost a series of set-piece scenes. Can you think of any other films that might in some ways be said to not have a structure of cause and effect?

But is this film really an exception? Within each set-piece scene the events that take place always follow a cause and effect sequence. And there is in fact a sense of linkage between the individual episodes:

- Bernard and Lydia get together as a couple at the first wedding and as a result constitute the occasion of the second wedding;
- we meet Carrie and her fiancé, Hamish, at this second wedding thus leading naturally into the third wedding;
- Gareth has a heart attack and dies at Carrie's wedding moving us logically by cause and effect to the funeral of the title;
- and from this gathering of the friends the necessity to marry pronounced by Gareth, the increased calm of Henrietta, and Tom's telling Charles that he had never hoped for a blinding flash, all lead naturally to the final wedding.

ACTIVITY . . .

1. Choose your own film and draw a diagrammatic representation of the ways in which cause and effect work within a single scene of your choice and within the structure of the whole film.
2. Explain your diagrams to a small group of other students who have undertaken the same exercise.

Characters

When approaching a film we should also consider carefully each of the main characters. Usually they will provide the filmmakers with a means of exploring various aspects of the human experience. Often they display particular commonly recognised traits of human nature, or complex inner conflicts of values and emotions. Often there will be contrasting, or parallel characters, who are used to highlight the oppositional

possibilities open to human beings; love and hate, compassion and brutality, vengeance and forgiveness, etc. Sometimes characters are dramatized as unique individuals, and at other times they are presented as symbolic representations of what are seen as particular types of character (perhaps a Christ-like character, perhaps a Satanic character, perhaps something on that broad spectrum in between). Certainly characters and the relationships between characters will be a key element of any film's approach to storytelling.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Define the natures of the characters in any film you have seen recently. List what you saw as being the key features of each character.
- Did you see them as being well rounded three-dimensional characters that you felt really could have existed or as being rather flat, one-dimensional and ultimately unbelievable?

NOTEBOX . . .

Flat and rounded characters are terms used by the novelist, E.M. Forster, when discussing literature in *Aspects of the Novel*. Rounded characters, it is suggested, have psychological depth, the complexity of real people. Often they are seen as being in some sense 'better' than flat characters that are underdeveloped or seem only to represent one aspect of human nature.

Stories in everyday life

Throughout our lives (or at least, from the time we are able to use language) we are surrounded by stories: fairy tales, nursery rhymes, myths and legends, novels, histories, biographies, biblical narratives, plays, TV soaps, comic books, newspaper articles, songs, even conversation and, perhaps, dreams. Every day in almost every everyday situation in which we find ourselves it seems storytelling plays a part. Eavesdrop on a few conversations and you will continually hear phrases that signal a story is being told: 'So, I said to her . . .', or 'I remember when . . .', or 'When we got there . . .' and so on and so forth.

ACTIVITY . . .

- List the types of story with which you have come into contact so far today and expect to come into contact with later today. (Think carefully about this and you should find that stories are a much more integral part of your everyday experience than you might have at first realized.)

continued

- Compare your list with that of at least one other person, if possible. See if anyone has thought of sorts of stories missed by other people in the group. Try to arrive at as exhaustive a list as possible.

ACTIVITY . . .

- What story do you remember above all others from your childhood? Write the story down keeping as close as possible to the original that you were told.
- Think about the story: what was it about it that made it memorable to you? Who told you the story? Do you remember where? Were these factors important in you remembering the story?
- Exchange memories with other people and see if their experiences are in any way similar to yours.
- If you were to analyse the story what would you say were its key aspects? Does it, for example, build tension, use suspense or surprise, involve colourful characters, or employ a repetition of events?

Storytelling expectations

All the evidence would suggest that the use of narrative is one of the fundamental ways in which we make sense of the world; stories could be said to bring order and structure to our otherwise chaotic experiences. As a result, as viewers who are already familiar with the storytelling conventions of narrative structure, we approach film with definite expectations. We expect to see a range of characters, or character types, involved in a series of structured events that occur in certain places and at certain moments in time. There are likely to be problems and conflicts, and these are likely to be finally resolved in some way after having reached some climactic moment of confrontation.

KEY TERM

NARRATIVE This term is really quite simply used as another term for 'story'. But it can also be seen (perhaps more correctly) as a more technical term relating to attempts to theorize the principles by which stories are structured. Some theorists, for example, have suggested that all stories have 'deep-seated' underpinning common narrative structures.

The expectations we bring to a film's narrative are derived from our general experience of life, but also, just as importantly, from our previous experience of film and other narrative forms (we know, for instance, that both when friends tell us about something that has happened to them and when we watch films there is usually a clear sense

of a beginning, middle and end to the story). Within this prior experience, our knowledge of genres (or different types of film and storytelling) will be responsible for the creation of a major component of audience expectation. So, if we are talking about storytelling forms in general we will know that fairy tales, for example, tend to follow certain conventions while novels follow slightly different 'rules'. And, if we are talking about types of film we will know that the conventions attaching to horror might in certain ways be different from those associated with sci-fi films. Within each genre there is a slightly different set of rules of narrative construction at work, a slightly different language of narrative structure that is known to both the filmmaker and the audience. The filmmaker may follow these rules, or (and this is a major part of the pleasure of narrative for the audience) they may subvert our expectations, creating surprise for the viewer.

KEY TERM

EXPECTATIONS The set of ideas each of us brings with us when we watch any film. These may be expectations to do with story structure, character development, or themes we anticipate will be dealt with; and they will be based upon our previous experience of these things.

KEY TERM

GENRE This term has at least a double usage here. It can be used to denote different general types of storytelling extending across a range of different media such as fairy tales, plays and TV soaps; so, simply different types of storytelling. But it can also be used to refer to the classification of films into types such as horror, romantic comedy, thriller or science fiction.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Think about a film you saw recently and jot down the outline of the plot structure (that is what happened in the order in which it happened in the film) perhaps in the form of a flow chart using arrows to show how one thing followed another.
- Try to decide what expectations you had when you went to see the film and whether the opening confirmed or challenged these expectations. Then, work your way through the narrative and decide at which points your expectations were fulfilled as you had expected and at which points you were surprised by what happened next.
- How did your expectations change and develop as the film progressed and what caused these changes?

Do all stories have the same basic structure?

Theorists interested in narrative structure have suggested that all films (indeed all stories) are structurally the same:

- we are introduced to a hero/heroine and shown the world in which they live;
- the normality of this world is disrupted;
- the hero/heroine sets out to restore order.

In basic terms we deal with a scenario of good versus evil, and a world in which order is set against chaos. Certainly experience would tend to suggest all stories are founded upon the idea of a conflict between two or more central characters or groups of characters.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Is it true in your experience that all stories seem to work around a central conflict and involve the basic features mentioned above?
- Discuss these ideas in small groups, considering a selection of films from different genres if possible. Do these general ideas hold true in all cases?
- What were, or who were, the representatives of good and evil in the narratives you discussed? Where could you see ideas about chaos and order at work? Was there always a point at which you could see the 'normality' of the given world being disrupted in some way?

Syd Field

But it is not just theorists looking at stories in general who have suggested there are deep-seated structures at work. Syd Field[1] advising on screenwriting said good scripts comprised three clear acts. The first gave the set-up showing where the action was taking place, introducing who was involved and suggesting in broad terms what was going to happen. At the end of the first act there was a crucial point at which the direction of the whole of the rest of the film was set up. According to Field this was followed by a second act with a key note of confrontation as the main character faced a series of obstacles to completing the central dramatic need of the film. At the end of this act there should be a further crucial point, he said, at which the central character would seem to have their goal in sight but would be faced with one final problem. And then in act three all the plots and sub-plots would be resolved.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Take any film of your choice and try to apply Field's outline for a good script to it. Does it fit? Can you identify the two key plot points at the end of acts

one and two? Are there any ways in which your chosen film doesn't seem to conform to Field's suggested pattern?
- Compare your ideas with those of other people, if possible.
- If you have time, try to find out more detail about Field's approach to scriptwriting.

The simple story

Even a simple sentence, such as 'The cat sat on the mat', amounts to an observation of a subject within a particular environment and as such could well form the exposition (or opening) to a story. The tranquil ordinariness of normality has been set up and as such is ripe for disruption. If we add to this first sentence a second, perhaps, 'A mouse passed slowly before the cat', we have developed the situation and (because of the nature of the relationship between cats and mice) introduced a complication to the basic situation. Continuing with a third sentence, 'The cat pounced and pounced again, while the mouse dodged this way and that', we are building towards a potential climax that might come with 'The cat brought down its paw on the mouse's tail, held him fast and bared its teeth'. Our reader because of her knowledge of narrative structure will now be waiting for the resolution phase and perhaps a twist in the tale: 'The mouse smiled. The cat looked confused. The mouse pointed behind the cat. A large dog bounded into the room. The cat ran. The mouse continued slowly on its way'.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Try to come up with your own short story comprising no more than 10–12 short sentences. The first sentence should set out a basic situation. The second should develop this a little and perhaps introduce some sort of complication. You should then move towards a climax before adding an ending that resolves the problem in your imagined world in some way.
- Alternatively, pass a sheet of paper around a small group of students and ask each person to write one sentence of a story. The first person sets out a basic scenario; the second introduces a further character or adds a complication, and so on. Aim to finish the story in 10–12 sentences and nobody is allowed to write more than one sentence at a time. Only read out the whole story at the end.

The use of time in stories

When we watch a film, we have to hold in mind at least three different time frames. There is story duration (the time frame in which we conceive of the story taking place), plot duration (the time frame within which we conceive of ourselves being told the

story), and screen duration (the amount of time we are actually sitting in front of the screen). The story is the simple chronology of narrative events. The plot is the arrangement of these events within the film.

KEY TERM

CHRONOLOGY The ordering of a series of events in time sequence. This is the simplest way of setting out a story and is important in films such as *Bloody Sunday* (Greengrass, 2002) (see FS3 British Cinema – Social and Political Conflict), involving the shooting of people taking part in a civil rights demonstration in Northern Ireland in 1972, where the development of events in sequence over a set period of time is a vital part of the whole creative enterprise.

In the classic romantic wartime drama *Casablanca* (Curtiz, 1942), through the use of flashback the story is able to cover a period of a year or more since Rick (Humphrey Bogart) met Ilsa (Ingrid Bergman) during the German occupation of Paris, but the plot takes place during just three days and nights as they meet again in Casablanca, and all of this occurs over a screen duration of just 98 minutes. Here flashback as well as the way in which stories leave out anything that is not essential to the progression of the narrative allows the compression of time to occur. Details given within the dialogue, such as Rick's involvement in prewar conflicts in Spain and Ethiopia, although they have no visual presence within the film enable us to extend story time still further into our characters' pasts. In the western *High Noon* (Zinnemann, 1952) in which we follow Gary Cooper's character, the sheriff, awaiting the arrival in town of the 'baddies' the screen duration of 85 minutes is the same as the plot duration since we experience his waiting minute by minute.

In *Billy Elliot* (Daldry, 2000) (this film could be considered further under FS3 British and Irish Cinema – Passions and Repressions) we essentially follow our central character over a period of about a year around the time of the miners' strike of March 1984 to March 1985. However, the story depends upon us being made strongly aware of the death of Billy's mother two years previously and includes a final scene some years later showing his ultimate success as a dancer. In *Orphans* (Mullan, 1999) (see FS3 British Cinema – Scottish Cinema) set in a contemporary period in Glasgow, in a film that is 98 minutes long we follow the stories of three brothers and their sister over the evening, night and morning before their mother's funeral. There is a clear pattern to the narrative structure with the four starting off together gathered around the coffin, dividing off into pairs and then further splitting off as individuals before coming back together by the end of the film. In the French film *La Haine* (Kassovitz, 1995) (this film could be considered further under FS5 Studies in World Cinema – Single Study Films) we essentially follow the intertwined stories of three friends living in the working-class suburbs of Paris over a single day. The film opens the morning after a night in which groups of young people have been involved in violent confrontation with the police, and it follows the three friends through the day and night and into the early hours of the next morning.

NOTEBOX . . .

Please note: there is absolutely no reason why you should have heard of any of the films mentioned in the two paragraphs above (although you might know of one or two of these films, at least by name), or in any other paragraph in this book. Gradually we hope you will widen your interest in films to encompass more and more different sorts, whether they are older movies, films from different countries, or films from genres you have not previously spent time watching.

The key thing with regard to the above examples is that you pick up the principles they are being used to explain and that you then try to apply these principles to films that you know.

ACTIVITY . . .

- List the story length, plot duration and screen time for any two films you have seen recently (they could of course be films you have used before for other exercises).
- Explain the narrative structure in as succinct a way as possible for both films. Use the explanations given above for structures of *Orphans* and *La Haine* as models for your work.
- Can you think of any films you know or have heard of where screen time is the same as plot duration?

The use of imagined space within stories

In spatial terms watching a film involves us in exploring at least two spatial dimensions. There is screen space visible within the frame, but there is also off-screen space that we are asked to imagine or remember from earlier. In effect we are asked to contain a whole imagined world within our minds. So, in *La Haine* we have some imagined spatial sense of the housing estate on which the three friends live and some sense of this as existing at a certain train journeying distance from the heart of Paris, and in *Billy Elliot* we have a strong sense of the mining community in which our central character lives. Similarly in *Orphans* there is a spatial sense of all of the events taking place within an imagined Glaswegian cityscape. *Casablanca* may have been filmed entirely in the Warner Brothers' studio in California, but as the opening image of the map of Europe and North Africa urges we are expected to inhabit for the duration of the film the imagined spaces of Casablanca and Paris.

Time and space travel

Time and space could be said to operate as the two key dimensions for film narrative structure. The film's storyline moves us through time and through space, from one

place to another and one moment to another, in order for us to follow a particular sequence of events that are set out in a specific sequence to tell the story.

This is at heart the 'magic' of storytelling and narrative film: we can be in Casablanca and then in Paris, in 1942 and then in 1940. However, do notice that this 'time travel' is not fundamentally based on the ability of the storyteller or filmmaker, the producer of the tale, to recreate other worlds and other times, but rather on the innate human ability to imaginatively occupy spaces outside of the here and now. The 'reader' of the film in other words is crucial to the successful realization of the imagined story.

ACTIVITY . . .

1. Watch any of the films mentioned here alongside a film of your own choice that you believe has an interesting narrative structure. As you are watching, make brief notes about where and when each scene takes place.
2. After you have watched each film decide what you would describe as being the beginning, middle and end to the film; in other words, its very basic narrative structure.
3. Without consulting with others try to draw a plan or diagram giving the pattern, shape or structure of the narrative.
4. For the films mentioned above in the text, if possible find somebody else who has watched the same film and compare your diagrams. Look for similarities and differences. Try to decide who has come up with the best outline plan and be very clear about why you think it captures the narrative structure most effectively.
5. For the film of your own choice, explain the narrative structure in detail to somebody else using your diagram for that film to help.

(Important: there is absolutely no need to complete all of the tasks suggested in this book. This one for example, will take time to do well and you might well not have the time. Activities are simply suggestions for things to do that will help you to ensure you understand the ideas being put forward.)

Cause and effect

As we are watching, we expect each element within the narrative to be seen to have both cause(s) and effect(s); we expect events to be motivated in some way, to have been caused by something we have seen in the film and to have some discernible outcome. Without this, all we would have would be a random series of unconnected scenes leading from nowhere to nowhere. By its very definition a story has an ordered series of events that leads to a conclusion.

KEY TERM

CAUSE AND EFFECT This refers to the way in which mainstream films are moved forward by one scene or event having been caused by an earlier one and in turn giving rise to an effect which is seen in a subsequent scene or event. What this means is that everything we see has been motivated by something we have seen earlier and in turn motivates something we see further on in the film.

Resolution

To a large extent because of our experience of mainstream film, we expect issues that have been set up within the film to be resolved in some clear-cut way so that we know what finally happens. And, in most films this does happen, especially since this resolution of the issues at stake is often a means of confirming social norms and accepted consensual values. So, perhaps, in *Casablanca* for example it is the necessity of personal sacrifice in time of war and the placing of collective social aims over and above individual wishes that is asserted.

In *Orphans* it is the bringing of the brothers and their sister together as a united family around the graves of their parents in the final scene and what might be interpreted as their collective realization of the need to move on that gives some sort of answer to issues faced by the characters in the film. But, it could be argued that through the film (and specifically through the experiences of the central characters) we too have in some sense faced and gained a perspective on the important human concerns they have faced. In *Billy Elliot* a large part of the feel-good factor gained from the ending comes as a result of us feeling that Billy's goal of becoming a dancer has been achieved. But there is also satisfaction being gained from the sense of 'family' unity achieved as a result of seeing his father, brother and best friend in the audience.

However, filmmakers can use our expectation that things will be sorted out by the end as a means of leaving us with uncertainty and ambiguity rather than answers. To some extent matters are resolved at the end of *Seven*, for example, but we are also surely left with a whole series of questions about both of our central characters and certainly the issues raised by the film are left (necessarily) unresolved. In fact we could go further and suggest the ending actually resolves matters in favour of evil in this film, with John Doe's (Kevin Spacey) plans being fulfilled to the letter. This is very unusual, certainly for a mainstream Hollywood film, and is worth considering in some depth if you have seen the film.

At the end of *La Haine* we are given the basic outcome of the day's events for our three central characters, but the wider issues raised by the film are clearly unresolved. We have been given a whole set of possible reasons for the state of society and a further set of potential outcomes that might result from this, but nothing within this wider social context has been resolved. At the end of *Seven* we can create our own possible future scenarios for Mills and Somerset: at the end of *La Haine* we can create our own possible future scenarios for a whole society. Both sets of filmmakers have in one way or another refused to totally close down the possibilities and left room for reader

interpretation. Some spectators might feel themselves deprived of the comforting sense of satisfaction that a story with all the loose ends tied up may offer: others may be excited by the challenge offered by such final disconcerting uncertainty.

KEY TERM

RESOLUTION The final phase of a narrative film that quite simply resolves all the storylines that have been set running. Films may of course leave some matters unresolved.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Take any scene within a film of your choice and work out a list of the effects and consequences that arise from that scene.
- Look back in the narrative and try to list the events that have caused your chosen scene to take place.

KEY TERM

EXPOSITION This is the opening to a film, which can often be *in medioreum* 'in the middle of things'. It sets up expectations and possibilities, and introduces key characters, locations and ideas.

Goal-oriented plots

In goal-oriented plots a character takes steps through the narrative to achieve a certain well-defined end. Such plots commonly revolve around searches, quests and journeys. *Billy Elliot*, for example, has already been referred to as having a goal-oriented plot: we essentially follow Billy's journey. Or plots can, as with detective stories, centre on the investigation (or search for information). *Seven* for instance works to resolve the mystery revolving around not only who the 'seven deadly sins killer' might be but also what his motivation might be.

ACTIVITY . . .

Can you think of any films you have seen that do not have clear goals, or objectives, set out? Is it the case that this is a feature of all narrative films?

Films that focus strongly upon the psychological state of a central character can internalize this search or investigation so that what we have is this character's inner struggle for meaning or some understanding of the self. This might be said to be true in relation to all three central characters in *La Haine* and at least two of the brothers, Michael and John, in *Orphans*. The ending, as we have said, may represent a closed resolution of the problem(s) faced by the main character(s), or it may be left more open to interpretation.

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE AND THE VIEWER

The narrative is, of course, also taking the viewer on a journey. Patterns of development within the plot will engage the viewer in the creation of expectations, which may be immediately fulfilled, delayed in their fulfilment, or cheated. That is, the filmmaker engages in gratification, suspense and surprise. The interesting thing is that each of these storytelling strategies is found to be pleasurable for the viewer.

Furthermore, however the storyline is structured it seems that because of our underpinning knowledge of narrative (whether inherent in some way to human beings or culturally learnt) we as the viewer have no choice but to actively engage in attempting to make logical narrative sense of what is unfolding before us. We are complicit in a vital way with the creative storytelling act; we willingly engage in the process, giving of ourselves both emotionally and intellectually.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Watch *Ratcatcher* (Ramsey, 1999) (see FS3 British Cinema – Scottish Cinema), if you have the time. Perhaps this is a film that could be seen in relation to a central character's journey or search.
- How would you define the goal being sought by James in such an interpretation? Would the ending suggest James reached his goal, and if so, in what way(s)?
- Decide on your interpretation or understanding of the ending and then discuss your ideas with others. Did everyone have the same interpretation?
- After discussion did you agree on one interpretation or did people still hold on to their individual understandings?

(Similar activities could be undertaken using a range of other films. *The Matrix* (Wachowski, 1999) and *Donnie Darko* (Kelly, 2001), for example, would be possibilities.)

The position of the reader

The view of events offered to us as we watch a film may be unrestricted, that is we may be permitted a godlike overview enabling us to know more than any single character or even all of the characters; or our view on things may be restricted, that is we may

only be able to see events from one character's perspective. In *Orphans* we occupy a privileged position being able to see what is happening to each sibling as they pursue their own individual narrative trajectories, but at the key climactic moment as John sets out with the shotgun to avenge his brother's stabbing it is vital that information is withheld from us in order to achieve the required shock effect. As this example suggests there is, of course, a whole range of possible ways films might use restricted and unrestricted narrative. Sometimes a single story incident may appear twice or more in the plot. Sometimes multiple narrators may describe the same event (in the famous Orsen Welles' film, *Citizen Kane* (1941), different narrators give their individual interpretations of Kane's personality and driving motivations).

ACTIVITY . . .

Draw up flow charts for *Seven* and any other film you have watched recently marking out at which points in the plot the viewer's perspective on events has been restricted and at which points unrestricted, that is to say at which moments our knowledge is in line with that of the central characters and at which moments we are privileged to know more than them.

As readers it is useful to continually ask ourselves if we know more than, less than, or as much as any given character. We may have greater knowledge than a character (this tends to lead to suspense – we anticipate events happening that the character cannot know about and wonder when these things will happen or whether our character will find out what we know before the anticipated event occurs), or we may have less knowledge than the character or be confined to that character's perceptual subjectivity (this tends to lead to surprise – we don't anticipate events but experience them in as unexpected a fashion as our central character). The director, Alfred Hitchcock explained this in classic terms by using the idea of two people at a table having a conversation with a bomb in a bag beneath the table. If we as the audience knew more than the characters and were aware of the presence of the bomb, suspense would be at work because we would be on edge wondering if it was going to explode. However, if we didn't know about the bomb and it went off we would experience the filmmaker's use of surprise.

We may also usefully ask ourselves as we are watching a film exactly how well we know any given character's thoughts, feelings and perception of the world. How sure can we be that we 'know' our chosen character? How confident can we be in their assessment of any given situation? Most films consider there is an objective narration (a position of detached, balanced judgement) to which we return from more subjective episodes; but some alternative approaches may see such objectivity as unattainable or at least severely problematic. There was much debate amongst the filmmakers over the way *Seven* should end. The ending that we have maintains Somerset's status as the reliable voice of reason and his concluding words as a narrator (despite the fact that a narrator has not been used throughout the rest of the film) are justified because of this

position of balanced judgement that he has occupied throughout the film. But you might want to look at the alternative endings that were mooted and discuss this point further.

NOTEBOX . . .

When you begin to consider these sorts of issues and look at the range of possible positions for the reader you begin to gain some awareness of the complexity of the reading process that is being undertaken as we watch a film. We are continually being expected to take up new perspectives, engage in new understandings, and shift our position in relation to new information.

Hollywood narratives

Hollywood narrative tends to focus on the psychological causes for actions or events that take place, for the decisions or choices that are made, and for individual character traits that are revealed. Often the narrative is driven by some form of desire, with the central character wanting to achieve some end; and there is usually a counter-force preventing him or her from achieving that end, perhaps a character that embodies an oppositional outlook or goal. So, in *Seven* we are continually being asked to understand events in terms of the psychology of our three central characters, the young rookie cop who believes in attempting to act as a force for good, the cynical older cop who believes nothing will ever change, and the insane psychopathic killer. (This sort of approach is very different from a narrative such as that used by the famous Soviet director Sergei Eisenstein for *Strike* (1924) (see FS5 World Cinema – German and Soviet Cinema of the 1920s) where events are seen to be caused not by individuals but to come about as the result of massive social forces embodied in whole groups (or classes) such as workers and factory owners. However, films that do not see events as motivated by the psychological make-up of characters are rare.)

ACTIVITY . . .

1 Consider these ideas in relation to a contemporary Hollywood film of your own choice. What are the psychological causes for each of the central characters' actions? What are the psychological causes for each central characters' key decisions or choices? What ends does each central character wish to achieve at various points in the narrative and what are the counter-forces working to prevent them from achieving these ends?
2 Explain your ideas briefly to a small group of other students if possible, perhaps using diagrams to illustrate your ideas.

In general, within Hollywood films of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s there is a strong sense of closure with no loose ends being left unresolved, the moral message is clear and good triumphs over evil. However, it is also true to say that endings can rarely be entirely tied down and often space is left for the reader to in part at least construct their own conclusion. At the end of *Casablanca* the German 'baddie' has been shot and the question of who gets the girl has been resolved for us, but what happens next to the characters we have followed throughout the film is to some extent unknown and open to conjecture.

Seven may have been made more than 50 years after Casablanca but fundamentally it works in the same way. We may be left somewhat uncertain about the future for Mills and Somerset, but the story involving the seven killings has come to a definite close. Our initial questions about why these events were taking place have been answered. The difference, perhaps, is that far from being defeated, evil might even be said to have triumphed.

Chris Vogler

Chris Vogler[2] claims any story involving a hero undertaking a journey involves several stages:

- the hero's ordinary world is established and he is given a challenge or quest;
- the hero meets someone who gives him advice or he obtains something that will help in the quest;
- moving into the special world the hero faces tests/enemies, finds allies and learns the rules of this world;
- the hero faces his greatest ordeal, almost fails, achieves his goal, but still faces the return journey;
- the hero returns to the ordinary world as a changed person.

The importance of the reader or viewer

Finally, it is important to realize that as spectators in the cinema we are not inactive: narrative depends upon an interaction between the text and the reader. Throughout the process it seems we are continually examining what has just happened and on the basis of our comprehension of that event within the context of the chain of events that have so far unfolded we ask questions about what is likely (based on our previous experience of similar narratives) to happen next. Although of course the notion of 'asking questions' is not quite correct since all of this seems to happen in a psychological flash.

Tzvetan Todorov

Todorov[3] sees narrative as following a common pattern of movement from a stable equilibrium to disruption of the equilibrium to a re-ordered equilibrium (achieved by action being taken against the force causing the disruption). You should be able to apply this template to the whole film and perhaps also individual scenes (do remember though that the initial balance may be suggested very briefly).

ACTIVITY . . .

- Choose a film and in a group work together to apply Todorov's narrative theory. (Obviously it will have to be a film that you all know well.) Alternatively, take a film that we have already considered as a case study.
- When you have done this try to do the same with Vogler's perhaps slightly more complicated suggested structure.

(This is a simplified version of Vogler's ideas, if you have time research his ideas in more detail. In particular find out the names of the seven key characters (or archetypes) he claims are always present and see if you can apply these definitions to characters in your chosen film.)

ACTIVITY . . .

- Watch *Run Lola Run* (Tykwer, 1999) making careful notes about the storyline, including characters and their relationships to each other.
- If possible, discuss with others what you would describe as being the beginning, middle and end to this film; and then try to construct a flow chart showing the film's narrative structure.
- How would you describe your relationship with this film and with the central character? Were you interested in what happened next and in what happened to Lola and Manni? Why? Discuss your ideas in groups.
- Why do you think Tykwer constructed his narrative in the way that he did? Was the construction aiding him in conveying certain meanings? Discuss your ideas in groups.

Narrative pleasure

One of the key functions of narrative is to deliver certain gratifications to us as an audience; films if they are to be successful in box-office terms must give pleasure to the audience in very particular, very predictable ways. We are 'pleasured' by knowing Todorov's pattern and seeing it unfold before us. We receive gratification from seeing our expectations confirmed but also from existing within the tension of wondering whether our expectations will be fulfilled or undercut. And perhaps we are most intensely 'pleasured' by finding the surprise of a new and unexpected twist that we are now able to add to our 'back-catalogue' of expectations. Another theorist, Barthes[4] proposed that narrative worked through enigmas or the setting up of mysteries for the reader to solve. Again, the idea is that this is a process by which pleasure is provided for the reader.

ACTIVITY . . .

- In groups try to identify ways in which any film you have seen recently pleasures the audience through the structure of the narrative.
- Go beyond narrative structure to see if you can identify further ways in which this particular film offers pleasure to the audience.

(If you're uncertain about this read the key the term 'pleasure' on p. 6 before returning to this exercise.)

Narrative dependence on oppositions

Taking a further possible approach, the work of Lévi-Strauss[5] is often taken as suggesting that narrative structure depends upon binary oppositions. This concept is essentially based around thematic concerns found in the text and suggests that for every theme you locate in the narrative its opposite will also be at work. So, if the notion of predator is attached to the scene with Marion and Norman in the parlour in *Psycho* then the idea of prey will also be relevant. Do be careful, however, about linking a single idea too strongly to one character. For example, if Norman is associated with darkness and the night then Marion will simply be linked to light and the day. Although in this case we might suggest this could be argued quite strongly, often the truth of a scene like this is more to do with the good and bad in both characters (and perhaps ultimately in all of us).

In *Seven* Mills and Somerset are clearly set up as binary opposites: the older, cynical, world-weary cop near to retirement and the young, enthusiastic rookie who wants to make a difference to the world. Interestingly though, this is far too simplified an analysis; for instance it begins to emerge that they may be much closer to each other in their attitudes than such a binary opposition might at first suggest.

ACTIVITY . . .

- In groups take a film of your choice and try to draw up a list of oppositions within the text.
- For everything within the list you need to be able to show actual scenes that illustrate the oppositions.

STORIES AND SOCIETY

The stories (legends, myths and sagas, for example) that are told in different cultures have often been seen as a means of coping with a society's experience of the world; from this perspective stories are seen as a way of making sense of a whole community's experience. Stories have also been viewed as the place where the collective memory

or experience of the society is held and by means of which that collective memory and experience of the world is passed on to successive generations. Could film function in these ways? Could films be said to offer a society a way of negotiating its way through or making sense of contemporary experience and perhaps a means of passing on that negotiated understanding to the wider community or next generation? How important might Hollywood prove to be in enabling American society to come to terms with the trauma of 9/11? How important was it in enabling that society to deal with the fractures within society that opened up around the Vietnam experience?

ACTIVITY . . .

What is your view on this? Had you for instance ever thought of film as perhaps performing through its created stories some sort of ritual function for society as a whole? Discuss your response with others.

(It may well be that you have never thought of film in these terms. If so, that is absolutely fine. What is being offered all the time here are potentially new ways of considering film. You should give each of them your careful consideration and then hold on to the basic idea so that you can try to see if it might fit any new films you come across.)

ACTIVITY . . .

1 Analyse a sequence of no more than ten minutes from *Run Lola Run* or any other film in terms of its narrative structure.
2 Make notes on your chosen sequence and then if possible discuss your ideas with somebody else, or several others, who are looking at the same film.
3 Write an analysis (1,000–1,500 words) of the ways in which narrative structure works to create meaning and generate audience response in your chosen sequence.

Case Study: *Moulin Rouge* (2001)

(Director: Baz Luhrmann. Screenwriters: Luhrmann and Craig Pearce. Producers: Luhrmann, Fred Baron and Martin Brown. Director of Photography: Donald McAlpine. Director of Music: Marius DeVries. Cast: Nicole Kidman (Satine), Ewan McGregor (Christian), John Leguizamo (Toulouse-Lautrec), Jim Broadbent (Harold Zidler), Richard Roxburgh (the Duke).)

If we watch the first ten minutes of this film certain key elements of the narrative will already have been set up for us and we will have a set of narrative expectations

about the rest of the film. This case study provides a framework for a narrative analysis which can be applied to any film of your choice.

The first prerequisite of any story is that it should grab our attention from the outset:

- How does *Moulin Rouge* seek to do this even before we have been introduced to any characters?
- What devices are used by the filmmakers to make the opening different from anything we have seen before?

And yet, at the same time because of the musical refrains that are chosen certain themes are already being suggested to us: what would these be?

- Is the hero clearly introduced? How do we feel about our hero? Have we, for instance, already started to identify with him? Do we have a clear sense of what he is like? What makes us fairly certain he is going to be the hero of the film? What possible complications or obstacles are already being set up for the hero?
- Which other characters are introduced in the opening sequence? What information do we find out about them?
- What information are we given about the world in which the film is set? Has the opening managed to create an imagined world in your mind? How has this been achieved? Can you apply the idea of equilibrium to this setting? What conflicts might cause a disruption to this world? Do we already feel we have some idea of what we think might happen?
- Have we been able to follow a clear cause and effect pattern between events in the opening? Has each event been clearly motivated so that we can understand why it has occurred?
- What questions are raised by the opening? How do you think these will be resolved by the end of the film? Are there mysteries or uncertainties about which we are keen to know more?
- Have goals been given or possible objectives suggested for the hero? Do we have any idea what he might find out about during the course of the film? Are there indications as to what his likely journey, search or quest might be?

Write an analysis of the ways in which the various aspects of narrative work to create meaning and generate audience response in the opening to *Moulin Rouge* (1,000–1,500 words).

Figure 2.2 *Moulin Rouge*
Source: Twentieth Century Fox/The Kobal Collection

CONCLUSION

One way of approaching films is to see them as stories. Essentially this involves analysing the various ways in which as stories or narratives they utilize certain common recurring features of storytelling or narrative structure.

FURTHER READING

Armstrong, R. (2005) *Understanding Realism*, London: BFI (Chapter 2).

Hayward, S. (2005) *Cinema Studies: the Key Concepts*, London and New York: Routledge.

Lacey, N. (2005) *Introduction to Film*, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan (Chapter 2).

Nelmes, J. (ed.) (2003) *An Introduction to Film Studies*, London: Routledge (Chapter 4).

Phillips, P. (2000) *Understanding Film Texts: Meaning and Experience*. London: BFI (Chapter 2).

Phillips, W.H. (2005) *Film: An Introduction*, 3rd edn, Boston: Bedford/St Martin's (Chapter 7).

Roberts, G. and Wallis, H. (2001) *Introducing Film*, London: Arnold (Chapter 4).

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.bfi.org.uk

www.filmeducation.org

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1 Syd Field, author of a key screenwriting text, *Screenplay*, who has worked as a consultant for Twentieth Century Fox, Disney, Universal and Tri Star Pictures.

2 Chris Vogler, author of another key screenwriting text, *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*, who has also worked for Disney and Twentieth Century Fox.

3 Tzvetan Todorov, a Bulgarian literary theorist interested in the structural principles underlying narrative.

4 Roland Barthes, a French cultural critic who through a varied series of approaches consistently rejected the idea that any sign simply worked as a representation of reality.

5 Claude Lévi-Strauss, a key exponent of structuralism, seeing apparently separate elements as only understandable when placed within the context of a system of relationships.

3 GENRE

What is genre and why is it such an important term in Film Studies?

This chapter deals with:

- defining the concept of genre;
- genre as a means of giving pleasure;
- acknowledging genres as dynamic and subject to change over time;
- recognizing the possibility of seeing genre as a form of film language;
- looking for similar thematic concerns across genres;
- recognizing the use made of genre as a marketing strategy;
- introducing the genre of film noir;
- suggesting possible approaches to *Seven*.

NOTEBOX . . .

This chapter will be directly relevant to the section on film form in FS1 – Film: Making Meaning 1 for the WJEC's AS in Film Studies and could be used to form part of the underpinning knowledge for one of the two required pieces of analytical coursework.

FILMS MENTIONED

If you are working your way through the whole or parts of this chapter you will find it useful to have watched the whole of *Seven* (Fincher, 1995) and at least the opening to *Scream* (Craven, 1995). You will also find it helpful to have access to scenes, clips and single shots from at least some of the following films:

- *Psycho* (Hitchcock, 1960)
- *East is East* (O'Donnell, 1999)
- *Runaway Bride* (Marshall, 1999)
- *From Dusk Till Dawn* (Rodriguez, 1995)

- *The Ballad of Little Jo* (Greenwald, 1993)
- *Notting Hill* (Michell, 1999)
- *Nosferatu* (Murnau, 1922)
- *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982)
- *Total Recall* (Verhoeven, 1990)
- *Independence Day* (Emmerich, 1993)
- *The Full Monty* (Cattaneo, 1997)
- *Collateral* (Mann, 2004)
- *The Big Combo* (Lewis, 1955)
- *Sin City* (Tarantino, 2005)

GENRE: THE CONCEPT

Most often narrative films are classified by both the producers of films and audiences according to the concept of genre; that is they are seen in terms of categories such as sci-fi, or musical, or western, or horror, or even sub-genres such as spaghetti western or 'slasher' movie. However, this way of classifying film is not usually analysed or examined in any way by most of us but is simply taken for granted.

If, however, we were to consider the issue we might recognize that each genre has its own iconography, that is to say characteristic props, costumes, settings and character types that act as visual signifiers alerting us to the appropriate category within which we can expect to pigeon-hole any particular film. There will also be musical signifiers (characteristic features of the soundtrack) and verbal signifiers (characteristic dialogue features), that is to say in general terms sound signifiers, indicating the genre being used by the filmmakers.

KEY TERM

ICONOGRAPHY As explained above, this simply refers to characteristic features of a genre, the things you expect to see and sounds you expect to hear that taken together collectively tell you the type of film, or genre, you are watching.

Again, as with all other film terms, knowing the name and what it means may be useful but it is not essential; it is recognizing the characteristic features that are signalling to you that this is a specific genre and being able to identify them at work within particular scenes within particular films that are important.

Case Study: *Scream* (1995)

(Director: Wes Craven. Screenwriter: Kevin Williamson. Cinematography: Mark Irwin. Music: Marco Beltrami. Cast: Drew Barrymore (Casey Becker), Neve Campbell (Sidney Prescott), Skeet Ulrich (Billy Loomis), Courtney Cox (Gale Weathers), Rose McGowan (Tatum Riley), David Arquette (Dwight 'Dewey' Riley).)

Watch the opening to this film. It should quite quickly become apparent what is being referred to here as the opening since it almost operates as a 'stand alone' short film in its own right concluding with a dramatic camera movement that propels us towards an equally dramatic image of a body hanging from a tree.

Assuming you were unaware of the film's genre when it first started, how quickly would you become certain of the genre? What main genre heading would you classify this as belonging to, and would there be sub-categories, or sub-genres, within this major classification that you would see this film as fitting into?

What would be the factors that would alert you to genre from an early stage? Do you initially become aware of an overall category, and then later sub-categories? If so, at what point do these two things become clear and what are the elements within the make-up of the film that make these categorizations apparent?

In practice, of course, an audience in a cinema, or people who had bought or rented the video or DVD, would already have a good idea of what they were about to watch. What factors prior to coming to view the film would mean the spectator was pre-warned about genre and had in fact probably made a conscious choice to watch the film on this basis? (The list of ideas you arrive at here will make it clear just how much use both audiences and the producers of films make of the concept of genre before the actual moment of viewing. Posters, trailers, critical reviews and the director's previous work, for example, should all be on your list.)

Work your way through the whole sequence, listing as many elements as possible that are used by the filmmakers to make the genre clear to us. One of the keys to completing as comprehensive a list as possible is to remember the work done earlier on film form. Use the headings, mise en scène, cinematography, editing and sound and note ideas beneath each for ways in which these elements of film construction are being used to signal the genre to us. You should also find factors relating to narrative such as character types, character relationships and plot structure that help in indicating genre.

Examples under each heading would include:

- the setting of the isolated house in the country;
- the use of knives as props in the kitchen;
- the change in Casey's (Drew Barrymore's) movements as she begins to realize the situation;
- the way in which a tracking shot is used within the house to follow Casey;
- the single shot of the raised knife;
- the change in pace of the editing towards the climax of the scene;
- the sound of the knife being replaced in its holder in the kitchen;
- sudden violent uses of language within the dialogue;
- the use of the attractive, blond girl home alone.

You should be able to add many more ideas to this list (especially if you are a fan of this type of film). You will notice, for instance, that colour, lighting and music are not even mentioned here. Particularly if you are a fan of the genre, you might like to spend some time picking out the references that are made to other horror films not only in the dialogue but also in the ways the film is constructed.

Make sure you watch the sequence several times and that you find time to compare your list with those made by other people. When you have done this you will in effect have completed a genre analysis of the opening to this film.

Research a list of films that are generally seen as having followed in the wake of *Scream*. (If you are a fan of the genre you will probably be able to come up with a very respectable list without doing any research.) You might like to discuss a sequence from one of these films applying the same approach as suggested above for *Scream*. *Scary Movie* (Wayans, 2000) would be an interesting choice for this exercise because of the ways in which it references *Scream*.

Figure 3.1 *The opening sequence of Scream*
Source: Dimension Films / RGA

Subverting audience expectations

As an audience we always need to be alert to the fact that our genre expectations may be subverted or undercut in some way by filmmakers who are well aware of the things audiences normally expect to find in films from any particular genre. So, for example, prior to *Scream* we would have expected the actor playing what is apparently the central female role to survive beyond the opening scene; and watching in 1995 we would have been shocked by the way in which our comfortable certainty was torn from us. Although you will also notice that once we have seen this particular shock tactic used, it becomes part of the array of horror genre possibilities to which we are alert as we watch our next horror movie (see *Scream* 2, for example). In fact it becomes part of the genre, something we look out for in subsequent films. In this way genre, and more importantly genre expectations, change and develop as filmmakers play with the norms of their chosen genre. (If we are enthusiastic enough to know some old horror films, we might even recall that it was Hitchcock who had his heroine killed off in a similarly challenging way in the middle of *Psycho* (1960), and armed with this knowledge we might not be quite so shocked by the opening to *Scream*.)

In a similar way but in a very different genre, *East is East* (O'Donnell, 1999) (see FS3 British Cinema – Comedy) is commonly seen as a comedy and yet if we approach it with too simplistic a notion of what a comedy can be, then it will confront us with some particularly challenging dramatic moments. This is a comedy that examines physical abuse within the home and is prepared to take on the potentially tragic aspects of a fundamentally loving inter-cultural relationship. It challenges our notions of what a comedy can be, or should be.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Choose any film you have seen recently and decide how you would describe it in genre terms (it might be a film that you see as related in genre terms to *Scream*). List the visual signifiers and sound signifiers that you believe confirm your categorization.
- Try to find time to compare your ideas with those of other people. Pay particular attention to similarities and differences between your ideas and those of anyone who has considered a film from the same genre as you.

Genre as a film language

The rules and conventions of genre constitute a type of language, or code, by which filmmakers construct film whilst at the same time also operating as a language, or code, by which the audiences read film. However, these rules and conventions are subject to change over time as social outlooks alter or filmmakers develop the genre. So, the horror 'rules' were changed by Drew Barrymore's character being killed off within the opening sequence to *Scream*, and this has now became part of the set of horror genre possibilities.

Gaining pleasure from the expected and the unexpected

Making choices within the conventional expectations of the audience for a particular genre will give that audience a certain comforting pleasure; we feel we know where we are and that we have been given what we have come to see. However, making choices outside the conventional paradigms, or sets of possibilities, available within any given genre will create a surprise for the audience, which can be at least as pleasurable as fulfilling expectations.

KEY TERM

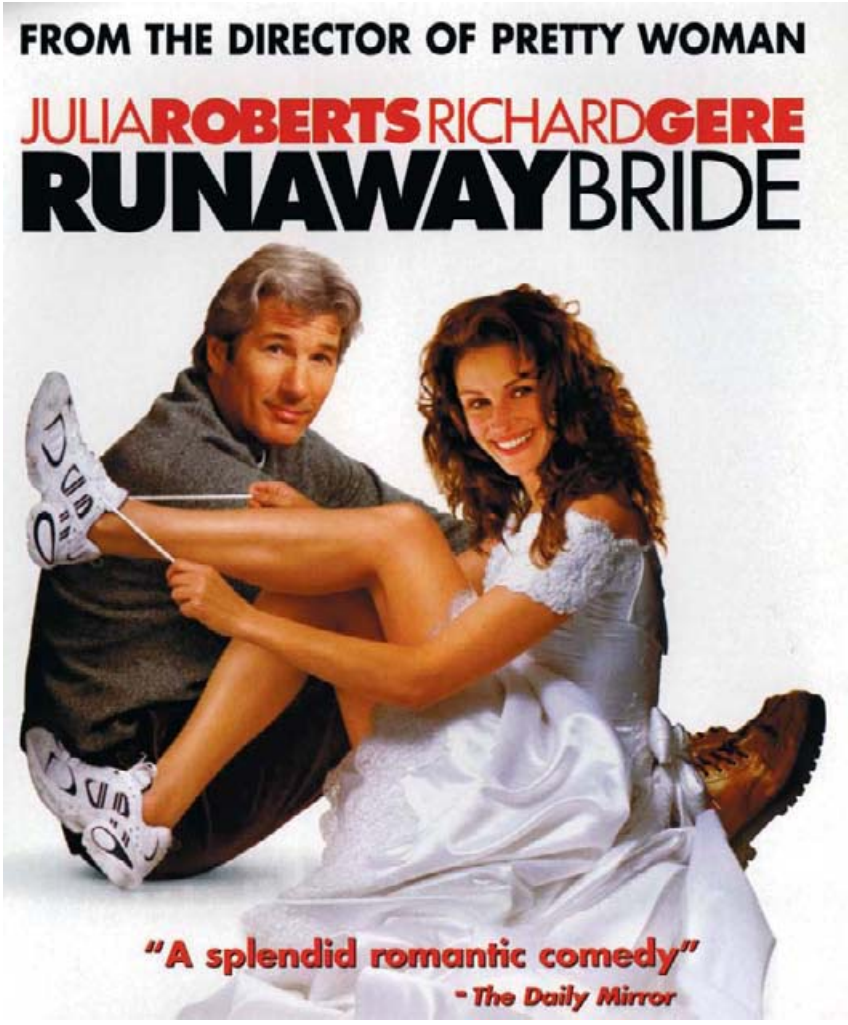
PARADIGM The term used to describe the range of choices available at any given moment of film construction. This covers a huge area, everything from which actor from the paradigm of possible actors should be chosen to play a given role, to which hat (from the paradigm ranging from no hat to top hat to deerstalker) a character should wear at any given point in a film.

It is a useful term for us for one reason only and that is it reminds us that at all times choices are being made in the construction of films and it is our job to try and decide why those choices might have been made.

The use of a black sheriff in *Blazing Saddles* (Brooks, 1974) or the use of a whaling harpoon as weapon of choice in *Terror in a Texas Town* (Lewis, 1958), challenges our expectations of the western but also in the process excites us as a result of the novelty of the take on genre conventions that is being offered to us. One of our central notions of what romantic comedies are all about is severely challenged by the idea that Maggie Carpenter (Julia Roberts) in *Runaway Bride* (Marshall, 1999) should fight shy of marriage rather than going all out to obtain it. As with the mask in *Scream* (inspired by the iconic painting of the same name by Munch) and a scene such as that in the garage in the same film the effort is always to find new iconographic effects for the genre.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Imagine that you were to change the actors playing the lead roles in any film you have seen recently. What might have been the most bizarrely inappropriate possible choices? Discuss your ideas with others if possible.
- Take a genre you know well and decide what events you can imagine happening that would most upset your expectations for that genre. Again, discuss and compare your ideas with other people.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"A splendid romantic comedy"
- The Daily Mirror

Figure 3.2 *Publicity poster for Runaway Bride*
Source: Paramount Pictures / Touchstone Pictures / RGA

In horror films the viewer knows a series of killings is likely to be carried out but the hoped-for novelty of how, when and where remain to be discovered. Similarly, as we journey with Mills and Somerset and the killer towards the final scene in *Seven*, as viewers of psychological thrillers we know there is going to be some disturbing final

twist. We know we are inhabiting the lull before the final storm and in one sense we await to have our expectations fulfilled, but our hope is that this will occur in an unexpected way that we have not previously experienced. In *Runaway Bride* we have been startled by the opening concept of a woman who is fearful of marriage, but if we know the genre well we will probably hold on to the hope that the resolution will be a bringing together of the key characters in a heterosexual romance.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Can you think of any films you have seen where your normal genre expectations have been challenged in some way, or where the usual formula has been given some powerful new twist?
- List your ideas and discuss them with other people, taking careful note of their ideas as well as your own.

Hybrid genres

The fun audiences derive from having their expectations fulfilled on the one hand and on the other subverted has been intensified in recent years by the way in which filmmakers have been happy to mix genres in order to create hybrid, or crossed, genres. In *Scream* there is a clear mix throughout the film of 'teenpic' with the 'slasher' movie; a mix which really creates something new, a 'teen horror'.

KEY TERM

TEENPIC A film featuring teenagers as the central characters and aimed at teenage audiences. The stories focus on the sorts of problems and difficulties faced by young people of this age.

KEY TERM

SLASHER MOVIE A type of horror film in which the story revolves around psychotic males with plans to murder a group of young people. This sub-genre was at its height in the 1970s and early 1980s with films such as *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (Hooper, 1974), *Halloween* (Carpenter, 1978), *Friday the 13th* (Cunningham, 1980) and *Nightmare on Elm Street* (Craven, 1984).

(There is often a disturbingly strong focus on the brutal murders of teenage girls, but there is also usually a 'final girl' who heroically wins out at the end and has been seen as an empowering female character.)

To some extent this mixing of genres has always taken place: noir films from the 1940s and 1950s were always thrillers and often also detective films. And in *Seven*, dealt with as a noir film in a case study at the end of this chapter, you will recognize elements throughout that might well lead you to classify this too as a detective film or a thriller.

In a modern film like *From Dusk Till Dawn* (Rodriguez, 1995) however something genuinely different occurs; rather than there being a hybrid mix throughout there is a sudden moment when the film moves from being a road movie and becomes a vampire/zombie film. This is a much more dangerous strategy for filmmakers since it breaks the unspoken pact between producers and audience under which the filmmakers have agreed to make a certain type of film that the spectators have agreed to watch. The break is so abrupt that it risks alienating the audience rather than delighting them.

KEY TERM

VAMPIRE MOVIE A horror sub-genre that owes a lot to Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* (1897) and again tends to feature male characters preying upon female victims, on this occasion by sucking their blood.

KEY TERM

ZOMBIE FILM A horror sub-genre in which the dead (the zombies) come back to life and attack the living. See *Night of the Living Dead* (Romero, 1968) and *Shaun of the Dead* (Wright, 2004) to compare older and more recent treatments of the genre.

Genre and binary analysis

From the point of view of genre analysis, as an alternative to looking for telltale iconography that reveals film type it is also possible to list oppositions found within a film. Different genres are often concerned with different sets of oppositions, and as a result have different thematic concerns. These are known as binary oppositions (a term mentioned previously in the chapter on narrative).

- In romantic comedies there is often a sense of a difficult opposition between the two central romantic figures that needs some how to be bridged if they are to be brought together. Often the woman may desire marriage while the man fights shy of such commitment.
- Westerns often focus to some extent on the tension between the untamed natural world to be found in the 'wild' West and 'civilized' city-based society in the East. (See Maggie Greenwald's *The Ballad of Little Jo* (1993) for a feminist perspective on this genre.)

- Film noir has classically often been concerned with the antagonism between a seductive (but deadly) female and a male character at the mercy of these alluring charms.
- Horror often focuses upon the opposed extreme possibilities of human nature with women as the embodiment of trusting innocence and vulnerability and a male figure as the personification of violent predatory desire: in short we inhabit a world that contains both good and most frighteningly, evil.

For each of these genres it would be possible to trace the existence of a host of other related oppositions. In a romantic comedy like *Notting Hill* (Michell, 1999) (this film could be considered further under FS3 British and Irish Cinema – Comedy) it is not just the sense that our two characters come from different social worlds but also that they represent in a sense England and America and that these countries somehow stand for oppositions between perhaps an intellectual literary culture and a rather shallow popular culture founded upon fame and wedded to financial accumulation as a barometer of success. And, since *Nosferatu* (Murnau, 1922) (this film could be considered further under FS5 Studies in World Cinema – German and Soviet Cinema of the 1920s) in film terms, and beyond that back into gothic novels and ultimately folk tales, the horror genre has explored the relationship of our comfortable, everyday experience of society to the hidden danger of the dark outsider lurking just beyond the pale; or, in an even more potent variation, the relationship of the community to the hidden monster lurking unnoticed within society.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Consider any film you have seen recently from a particular genre and decide how you would view it thematically in terms of binary oppositions.
- Taking two strongly opposed characters within a film and listing their characteristics can sometimes help to make the central oppositions within the whole film clear.
- Think of other films you know in the same genre. Are the ideas you have come up with for your film generally used as oppositions within the genre?

The recurrence of themes and interests across genres

We might also explore the ways in which different genres find different ways of negotiating, managing, or dealing with the same fundamental social issues. The city, for example, which is a focus of noir films also often appears in science fiction films where it is frequently a place of dehumanized brutality and isolation not so different from the labyrinthine place of entrapment found in noir films (see for example *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982) and *Total Recall* (Verhoeven, 1990)). In sci-fi it is usually very clear that it is human society which has brought things to this situation. It is not, as with horror, that there is some inexplicable evil at the heart of man but that governments

or huge corporations have mechanized, de-personalized and regimented the human experience of life. The city in *Seven* is the dark, foreboding place of rain found in *Blade Runner*, but interestingly it is also the place of horror where evil lurks in human form as well as being the nightmare world of noir films. As we explore genres in more depth what is often most startling is the extent of the overlapping interests that emerge.

Romantic comedies deal humorously with misunderstandings between the sexes that get in the way of the achievement of harmonious heterosexual marriage. They focus on women who desire the state of matrimony and men who to begin with are none too sure it is what they want. But the re-assertion of the role, value and importance of marriage (at a time, we might note, when more couples have been choosing not to get married) is not confined to romantic comedies. There is, for instance, a sub-plot that runs throughout the American 'feel-good' alien invasion sci-fi film *Independence Day* (Emmerich, 1993) that is entirely devoted to re-asserting romantic love and the institution of marriage. This strand of the film comes to a climax worthy of the most romantic of romantic comedies when as one couple get married the second couple who were parted before the film began hold hands and we see the wedding ring that has been loyally worn by the man throughout the time of their separation. Similarly, at the end of a comedy such as *The Full Monty* (Cattaneo, 1997) (see FS3 British Cinema – Comedy) that does not have a dominant romantic focus, one of the clear implications is the re-establishment of romantic links between each of the two central couples. The partners in each relationship have been estranged from each other for different reasons but the use of camerawork and editing visually reunites them for us in an emotionally gratifying way in the final scene.

The value of this sort of approach to genre is that by looking at films in this way we will be able to identify particular themes that are of central concern to a range of films that do not initially appear to be linked by an analysis based upon simple iconography.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Can you think of any two films (or more) you have seen from different genres where the same thematic concerns or interests have been apparent?
- Take time to jot down any ideas you might have on this before discussing the issue with other people. Take careful note of their ideas as well as your own.

Genre as a means of bringing order

There is a sense in which genre is like narrative in giving a certain shape and order to events. Each genre can be seen as a set of rules that allow the shaping of the disorder of life into some sort of controllable order. Within film genres the insoluble problems and contradictions of life can be, if not resolved, at least shaped into manageable, understandable forms. By the end of *Collateral* (Mann, 2004) the psychopathic killer in our midst has been tamed by the ordinary guy who through the experience has somehow been elevated to the status of hero.

ACTIVITY . . .

Consider any film you have seen recently from a particular genre and decide what sorts of 'dangers' might be said to be dealt with by the film. Are the 'dangers' you have come up with generally to be found within films from this particular genre?

You should expect to develop further this sort of approach to genre during the second year of the Film Studies A-level but it is worth giving it some initial thought at this stage.

Genre as a marketing strategy

Finally, it should also be noted that genre conveniently operates as a marketing and production strategy, enabling the audience to establish the type of product on offer and therefore to purchase its favoured flavour of film. So, when you enter a DVD rental outlet or a shop selling DVDs, the posters and the DVD boxes themselves will usually announce fairly specifically the genre of the products on offer.

At the same time in production terms clearly marked out genres enable the economic organization of materials and workers to take place, as seen for example in the production of a whole string of gangster films in the 1930s by Warner Brothers or a whole string of British comedies by 'the makers of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*'. Re-making the same film with some difference enables sets, locations, costumes and other elements of film fabric to be re-used and helps to set up easily reproducible working patterns in which little time is lost in preparation because the cast and crew have essentially done it all before.

ACTIVITY . . .

Take any recent film and study the ways in which it has been sold to the public through advertising, posters, DVD boxes, etc. How important has genre been in the marketing strategies employed?

FILM NOIR

General features

Film noir was a term initially used by French critics (literally 'dark' or 'black film') to describe Hollywood films of the 1940s and early 1950s characterized by cynicism and pessimism and set within an oppressive urban world of crime and corruption. The 'heroes' are usually disillusioned men who face an uncertain future alone. Friendship is difficult and only possible at a certain distance. Love is most usually perverted in some way, and innocence cannot survive.

In style the films are dark, stark and bleak with sets dominated by shadows of various depth and threat, and frames that often contain black or fog-bound or smoky spaces that threaten to engulf not only the characters but the film itself and the society it presents for our attention (as a classic example see the ending to *The Big Combo* (Lewis, 1955) with the blinking, uncertain light offering only a faint possibility of hope for the future).

Influence of German Expressionism

The trend towards this type of film in the period is seen as having been influenced by the influx of immigrant filmmakers from central Europe and disillusionment caused by the Second World War. It has also been suggested it was economically driven by the cutbacks in sets and lighting made during the war and more feasibly the desire to produce low budget films with good percentage profit margins.

Certainly there is a strong sense in which these films both in terms of cinematic style and bleak thematic content echo German Expressionist film of the 1920s, a movement that can also be seen as having been influenced by the traumatic experience of world war.

Reflecting the period

Films of this sort from Hollywood in the 1940s and 1950s then tended to be cheap B-movies about life on the streets that investigate the darker side of human nature. This is an area of life, it could be argued, that mainstream Hollywood films have tended to ignore other than in some unrealistic romanticized fashion. The central character in noir films is caught in a nightmare experience, and is often trapped by a seductively alluring woman. Is this the continuation of wartime trauma in a domestic situation? Was there a sense of the world as a doomed place during this period? Is this, in some films at least, anything to do with the Cold War fear of communism? Is this the nightmare of filmmakers caught up in the McCarthyite era when anyone with socialist sympathies was liable to be ostracized? Psychoanalytically, is this a representation of the male fear of the emerging 'new woman'? Or, is this simply an economically driven transposing of popular pulp fiction to the screen motivated by the realization that if pulp fiction sold there would also be a market for pulp film? Technically, faster films, portable cameras and button microphones made it increasingly possible at this time to film on the streets and at night (see, for example, the bank heist and chase sequence in *Gun Crazy* (Lewis, 1949)).

ACTIVITY . . .

1 Watch the opening to *The Big Combo* and one modern neo-noir of your choice, perhaps *Sin City* (Tarantino, 2005). Make notes on the ways in which these films announce their genre to us.
2 As always, do try to discuss your ideas with others, if possible.

More recent examples

There was a revival of this style in the 1980s and early 1990s in films such as *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982), *Jagged Edge* (Marquand, 1985), *Blue Velvet* (Lynch, 1986), *The Usual Suspects* (Singer, 1995) and *Seven*. Perhaps it would be worth considering what social and political factors could be reflected in this renewal of interest in the darker side of humanity (if indeed this is not simply something that is always there in storytelling and is just expressed in slightly different ways in different periods).

ACTIVITY . . .

If you have seen the whole of *Sin City* how does it fit into this picture? Should it be seen correctly as the latest addition to the noir genre? And if so, how does it, while still being recognizable as part of the noir strand of genre filmmaking, reflect the contemporary period in which it was made?

Approaching noir films

For films in the classic noir or neo-noir mode it is always worth considering:

- the psychological exploration of the darker side of humankind that takes place;
- the social exploration of the darker side of society that takes place;
- the urban realism that often sees modern life as a labyrinthine hell;
- the use of light and shadow as representations of good and evil/danger;
- the use of sparse sets that could be seen to represent the bleak psychological world in some way;
- the use of psychological and actual violence, often within relationships and particularly within the sexual dimension of male–female relationships.

Case Study: *Seven* (1995)

(Director: David Fincher. Screenwriter: Andrew Kevin Walker. Cinematographer: Darius Khondji. Music: Howard Shore. Cast: Brad Pitt (David Mills); Morgan Freeman (William Somerset); Gwyneth Paltrow (Tracey Mills); Kevin Spacey (John Doe).)

ACTIVITY . . .

- Watch the opening sequence built around the credits noting as many images and sounds as possible.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Record your impressions making sure to try to decide what this opening makes you think the film will be about, justifying your ideas by reference to the images and sounds encountered.
- Discuss your ideas with a group of others, if possible. To what extent did you agree with each other's assessments?

The relationship between two central characters

In *Seven* we have the classic detective genre combination of the older, hard-bitten professional and the younger, less cynical prodigy. This is a combination often used in other genres of course such as the western. What it allows for is the classic confrontation and need for reconciliation between old age embodying experience of life and youth embodying enthusiasm for life. Of course, what we also have at work here is a potential father–son relationship and the working out of the tensions and joys to be found in that relationship. (Furthermore we also have the now often favoured Hollywood combination of lead actors: black and white.)

ACTIVITY . . .

- Can you think of other black–white pairings of this sort?
- How do these relationships work? Is race an issue in these relationships? Isn't it always an issue simply by being there on screen before us?
- Why do you think these combinations are used?
- Discuss your ideas with others if possible.

Use of film noir genre

What is very clear from the continual murky gloom and rain of the city to the dark central thematic idea of the seven deadly sins is this film's noir heritage. Outside we are frequently positioned in such a way as to be surrounded by bleak, grey city buildings that tower over us, or we see things from behind fences that seem to cage and enclose. Inside we find ourselves in dark corridors and box-like rooms, and always the intrusive sounds of the city remain inescapable. The city is this terrifying place where Tracey, the Ophelia-like embodiment of innocence, shudders at the thought of bringing up a young child and where even the perverse logic of the serial killing John Doe contains a horrifying element of truth. Notice the way in which even the calm, ordered, learned and apparently highly civilized Somerset has this midnight habit of throwing a switchblade at a dartboard. For

Somerset, if Mills is his younger self with a belief that with others he can contribute towards bringing about change for the better, then Doe is almost his alter ego, an other self whose thinking as a result of his own world weary cynicism he is able to only too fully understand.

Dark themes and outlook

Anything that is good cannot live in this world of darkness and so the fate of Tracey and her unborn baby, as with Ophelia in H*amlet*, is entirely to be expected. Notice how we do not see her death and even when John Doe talks about it, the details are left to our imagination. See as well the way in which it is not simply the death of Tracey that is at stake here but the death of hope and faith in humanity and confidence in the future (see what happens ultimately to Mills).

The evening meal scene in which we initially come to identify with Tracey also serves to set up her relationship with Mills as the ideal high school romance. They are in their 'young love' relationship in many ways the embodiment of 'the American Dream' and of course this is what is also therefore destroyed in the resolution phase.

The woman here is not the femme fatale of classic postwar film noirs but much more like the embodiment of innocence that has often had to sacrifice itself to save others in horror movies, only this time the sacrifice is pointless and fails to defeat evil. It is perhaps in this dimension of the film, as much as in the central often commented upon triangular relationship between the male characters, that the way in which this film reflects a late twentieth-century perspective can be seen most clearly.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Which parts of this film did you find most shocking? Why? Write down your ideas.
- Compare your thoughts with those of other people, if possible. Were there any similarities or interesting differences in your ideas?

Analysis of a scene

The brothel scene in which the detectives investigate the 'lust' murder would serve as an excellent example of this film's style. We descend from the dark, chaotic streets above following the detectives down into the red hell-like depths of the brothel. We are confused by the noise, which makes it difficult to pick out what is being said, and by the editing that works to further disorientate us as we struggle to get our bearings. The overall feeling is one of being enclosed in claustrophobic

tunnel-like spaces, which is not relieved when we come into the dark boxed space of the room in which the murder took place. Here we are placed in such a position as to be unable to make out exactly what has happened. In other words we are left with further uncertainty and confusion. Only gradually in the interview session that follows are we permitted to piece together bit by horrifying bit the gruesome details of the murder. Shots such as that of the close-up of the male visitor to the brothel who has been forced to carry out the murder compel us to confront the full extent of the horror. The blank grey background and the white blanket framing his face only serve to make doubly sure that we concentrate on the actor's facial performance; and isn't it a powerful cameo performance?

ACTIVITY . . .

Watch these two successive scenes and discuss with others the ways in which elements of film construction work to create a specific impact on the audience.

The Christian context

Sin is the concept of human faults that offend a God who embodies all good. These faults, or evil, bring with them a sense of guilt for any being with a conscience (and guilt of course carries connotations of the need for punishment). According to Christian teaching, the seven Deadly sins are anger, lust, gluttony, sloth, pride, envy and avarice.

ACTIVITY . . .

Construct a flow chart showing the narrative structure of this film in terms of these seven sins showing how they relate to different elements of the plot.

The existence of sin in the wor ld brings with it the need for a Redeemer or Saviour, in Christian terms Christ, who is seen as having died for our sins, making himself a sacrifice that we might be forgiven. Without this sort of basic knowledge of the Christian religion it is difficult to fully appreciate *Seven*, but with it you begin to see the way in which John Doe could be seen to believe himself to be some sort of Messianic figure, perhaps even a divine agent sacrificing himself in order to provide a message/lesson for humanity.

ACTIVITY . . .

- After you have watched the whole film, return to the opening sequence.
- How has your reading of this section of the film changed?
- What images and sounds seem significant now in ways that they did not to begin with?

ACTIVITY . . .

1. Analyse a sequence of no more than ten minutes from a film of your own choice in terms of its genre and narrative structure.
2. Make notes on your chosen sequence and then if possible discuss your ideas with somebody else, or several others, who are looking at or know well the same film.
3. Write an analysis (1,000–1,500 words) of the ways in which genre and narrative structure work to create meaning and generate audience response in your chosen sequence. Give your piece a title in the form of a question:

How do genre and narrative structure work to create meaning and generate audience response in the (name or timing of scene) scene in (name of film)?

CONCLUSION

- Genres have distinctive individual characteristics that enable us to distinguish one from another in a general functional way.
- Genres can be understood as being utilized by filmmakers, spectators and the film industry in a variety of ways.
- Often the boundaries between genres will be blurred and similar interests/concerns will be detectable across genres.

FURTHER READING

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USEFUL WEBSITES

www.bfi.org.uk

www.filmeducation.org

www.filmsite.org

en.wikipedia.org

4 OVERVIEW

How should we approach a film we have not seen before?

This chapter deals with:

- essential questions to ask yourself when studying a new film;
- the importance of adopting a proactive, questioning attitude;
- possible model approaches to interrogating films.

NOTEBOX . . .

In terms of preparing for the WJEC's AS in Film Studies, this chapter should help you to draw together ideas from the opening chapters and consolidate a sensibly organized approach to the viewing of films. Most directly this chapter will be of relevance to the work you will be doing under FS1 – Film: Making Meaning and FS3 – Messages and Values: British and Irish Cinema for the AS (and FS5 – Studies in World Cinema for the second year of A Level study).

FILMS MENTIONED

If you are working your way through the whole or parts of this chapter you will find it helpful to have access to scenes, clips and single shots from at least some of the following films:

- *My Beautiful Laundrette* (Frears, 1985)
- *My Son the Fanatic* (Prasad, 1997)
- *Independence Day* (Emmerich, 1993)
- *La Haine* (Kassowitz, 1995)
- *Sin City* (Tarantino, 2005)

QUESTIONS

By now you should have noticed just how much emphasis is being placed in this book on the need to adopt a continually questioning approach towards film. In order to analyse a film text, it is being suggested we need to be prepared to ask ourselves a whole range of key questions. This chapter will try to give a brief overview of what those central questions should be.

The fundamental basis to this approach is that we should always confront ourselves with the question of why the filmmakers have chosen to use certain sounds or images at particular points in their film. Remembering that there are a whole array of possible choices and combinations of choices before the filmmakers (with regards to setting, costume, props, performance, camerawork, sound and editing) we must question why particular clearly identifiable choices have been made.

Posing questions for ourselves as we watch films is at the heart of film analysis. In order to study film effectively we need to have questions like the following in mind throughout the viewing experience:

1 Messages and values

- What are the main subject areas of interest in this film and what are the main themes and ideas being addressed? Could it be said that there are certain key messages and values that underpin the film?
- Answering these sorts of questions demands the ability to be able to stand back from the narrative and attempt to see the film from an objective distance but we can make it seem to be much more difficult than it actually is. For example, if the film is made within a predominantly white society but focuses on an ethnic minority, as with something like *My Beautiful Laundrette* (Frears, 1985) or *My Son the Fanatic* (Prasad, 1997) (this film could be considered further under FS3 British and Irish Cinema – Single Study Films), then the film will inevitably be dealing with issues of race in some form or other. And, if you have a Hollywood film that is called *Thelma and Louise* (Scott, 1991) there is a good chance that in some form or other it might have something to say about the female experience in modern Western society. Or, if you have a film entitled *Independence Day* (Emmerich, 1993) it is very likely to be addressing the American understanding of the United States as a freedom-loving democracy.
- Of course, you need to go further than this and ask in some detail exactly how men and women, or different races, cultures and creeds are represented in any particular film. Do they comply with stereotypical role models, or defy the conventional and challenge social norms in some way? Or, how exactly are ideas of democracy and freedom being represented and with what relationship to the politics of the real world?

KEY TERM

MESSAGES AND VALUES Films can be seen in some sense to embody certain messages that they are working to communicate to the audience. They can also be seen to be attempting to advance certain values while questioning others.

La Haine (Kassowitz, 1995) has been attacked as a film that has a message that is anti-police: whether this is true or not would depend upon how we interpreted characters and scenes within the film and how we understood the filmmakers to be using film construction techniques to emphasize and elevate certain perspectives above others.

2 Genre

- Is this film typical of any particular genre (sci-fi, horror, action, comedy, musical, road movie, etc.) or sub-genre (dystopia, alien invasion, 'slasher', vampire, zombie, etc.)? In what ways is it typical and in what ways is it not typical (atypical)?
- Could this film be said to use several genres, and if so which ones and why have they been combined in this way? Does it demonstrate the current trend towards hybrid genres?
- More importantly, how does the chosen genre relate to views and perspectives in society in general? How does it reflect the period in which it has been made? How does a noir film like *Sin City* (Tarantino, 2005), for example, adapt its particular chosen genre and in doing so reflect contemporary society?

3 Narrative

- How is the story being told: is a narrator used, and if so, why? Does he or she have a marginal or important role in the story itself? What effect does using a narrator or not, have on the perspective given to the viewer?
- How effective is the opening, and what makes it so? How effective is the ending, and what makes it so?
- Are there clear moments of complication and climax within the film? Could you plot as if on a graph the rising tensions and climaxes of the story?
- Could you usefully complete a diagram, or diagrams, representing the relationships between characters within the story?
- Are conventional aspects of storytelling such as the confrontation between good and evil, or the use of a journey as a narrative device being employed?
- And most importantly what are the meanings being created for us by the particular narrative structure and devices being employed?

4 Mise en scène

- What would be your evaluation of the performances of the actors? Are the characters created complex or simple to understand? Is their motivation clear? Are they rounded and complex, or flat and stereotypical?
- What is the social status of each character and how dominant are they? Does their use of language reflect their character? What tone or attitude does each adopt? What ideas or feelings are being expressed?
- What can you tell about the character from the body language and delivery of lines? How long does each person speak and what does this tell us (in

different circumstances it could convey different things of course – a silent foreboding Clint Eastwood in a spaghetti western is very different from someone who is being marginalized by the force of events taking place such as the rookie policeman forced to witness a racist attack by fellow officers in the interrogation room in *La Haine*)?

- What is the significance of costume in particular scenes? Does it help to convey character and/or oppositions? Does it operate to mark out particular groups? Is it simply used to suggest period and place? Are the costumes wonderfully authentic but actually used to little effect in terms of conveying meaning to the audience?
- Are there any significant uses of props? Are there any props used in such a way as to become recurring images? Do the props remind us of themes or ideas in the film, or tell us something about character?
- How is the setting or location used? Is it used to create a sense of realism? Is it used to create mood? Is it used to create a sense of certain states of mind or feelings? Is it used to stand for, or symbolically represent, other things?

5 Cinematography

- Are there any scenes or single shots in which you think the camerawork has been particularly effective? If so, how and why do you believe it to be successful?
- What significance do particular shots or camera movements have in terms of creating meaning for us? (Referring to particular shots and scenes to illustrate meaning in this way will be a key skill.)
- What is the significance of the lighting in particular scenes? Are some scenes particularly light or dark? If so, why? How is shadow being used? Is it being used in particular ways in relation to particular characters?

6 Sound

- Do any extracts from the dialogue seem to be especially important? In what ways might these lines be seen to be significant? Why have particular words or phrases been chosen? If it is a Hollywood script the dialogue will have been honed to the bare minimum in all probability which only means each utterance is even more certain to have been chosen for a specific reason.
- Are sound effects used simply to create a sense of place, or do they in some way contribute towards meaning over and above this?
- What is the significance of the music chosen for particular scenes? How does it work to contribute to the creation of meaning? Is it diegetic or non-diegetic (see page 100), and what difference does this make?

7 Editing

- Is the pace of the editing in particular scenes giving us images that are flashing quickly before us, or images that we are able to survey in a leisurely way? Why has this style been chosen?
- How do the shots, as they are structured into sequences via editing, work to create meaning? Is the way in which one shot follows another used in such a way as to allow one to comment in some way on the other?

- Which images are stressed? Why? Are there repetitions of certain visual images, or parallels between individual shots or sequences?

PROACTIVE READING

With so much to look out for this must mean that our reading of films has to be intensely active and analytical; at no time should we sit before the screen in classic 'couch potato' mode. Naturally there is an extent to which we may simply wish to enjoy the cinema experience on first encountering any film. However, even during a first viewing we should remain alert otherwise potentially we end up at the position apparently reached by a majority in Hitler's Germany of accepting the implied message behind watching shots of Jews inter-cut with shots of rats scurrying across the screen. Passivity before the media in any form allows that medium to be used not as a site of democratic discussion but as an agent of indoctrination. Josef Goebbels apparently said of *Jew Suss* (Harlen, 1940) in which the central character, an 'evil Jew', rapes Aryan women that it was: 'Highly recommended for its artistic value, and to serve the politics of the state recommended for young people.'

NOTEBOX . . .

The main approach to be adopted is always to move from the specific to the general. Observe the details of film construction closely and then think carefully about why the particulars of form and style have been chosen. If you cannot find enough to say about a particular scene it means you are not observing the fine details of film construction closely enough. Try to, as it were, 'zoom in' closer, slow down your viewing, go back over a scene time and again as you work to understand what is happening under each area of film construction.

A PRACTICAL APPROACH

Obviously investigating a film in this way means that there are big questions raised that can never be answered in any final sense. Is *La Haine* anti-police? The presence of the police within so many controversial scenes within the film means it must be seen to raise the question of the role of the police in relation to the issue of race within contemporary French society, but whether this makes it anti-police is another question.

The point to be aware of is that we will never get to the stage of even noticing the existence of these bigger issues within the film unless we devote ourselves to a detailed questioning of the text. It is in the asking of the little 'why' questions (why is there that little moment in *La Haine* where Sayid and Hubert get Vinz to speak for them when they enter the expensive block of flats in central Paris?) that we stumble along our way towards some awareness of the larger issues that could be at stake. (Quite simply, Sayid is of ethnic Arab descent and Hubert is black, while Vinz, although a Jew, is at least

white. It is a minute incident that we can easily miss but if we slow our viewing down so that we notice it, it becomes a telling comment.)

Before you can begin to answer some of the questions posed by a film like *La Haine* you may need to have watched the film several times and have taken some notes along the way. If you are studying in a formal way you will need to sit for some time with a DVD (or video) stopping and starting it, rewinding and re-running it, and all the time adding to your notes.

NOTEBOX . . .

On a practical note, you might find it useful first time around to leave sizeable spaces between individual ideas that you note down. These gaps can then be filled in with further ideas during subsequent viewings. Ideally, you should also aim to write down timings next to notes in order to make it easier to find significant sections at a later date.

Your notes should be made up of references to settings, characters, props (and perhaps their symbolic significance), the soundtrack, themes and ideas that the film seems to be addressing, clues about the director's approach, ideas on the acting approaches being taken, and possibly significant extracts from the script; in other words, all of the areas detailed briefly above and a little more fully in previous chapters. A series of viewings should allow your reading to become steadily less narrative-driven and increasingly technically and thematically analytical.

ACTIVITY . . .

1. Choose your own film to analyse, preferably one you have at home and therefore can easily access. As you are watching this film for the first time note any interesting elements of film construction, but at the same time try to put down ideas you might have about when and where this film is set.
2. After you have watched the film write 200–300 words assessing how important you think it might be to understand the historical context in order to gain a full appreciation of this film.

ACTIVITY . . .

1. Re-watch the opening to this film several times and make detailed notes about film construction.
2. Spend time discussing with others if possible how this opening sequence works in terms of creating meanings for the audience and generating responses.

continued

3 Write a commentary (500–600 words) discussing the ways in which meanings are created and responses generated in this sequence.

CONCLUSION

Approaching a new film requires that we:

- already know the sort of questions that need to be asked of any film;
- apply those questions in a probing, analytical way.

5 PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF LEARNING

In this chapter we look at:

- how learning from other areas of the course can be applied to a piece of practical work (storyboarding, screenwriting, or production);
- how to develop ideas in a cinematic way;
- practical techniques of constructing storyboards, screenplays, and filmed extracts.

Studying film offers a wealth of learning about technique, styles, approaches, methods, and devices which of itself is a fantastic way of understanding more about how films make meaning, and what filmmakers have to do in order to get their meanings across to audiences. A great way to make further sense of this learning is to use it to make a filmed sequence, a short film, or even a feature, and in doing so apply the learning that has been gained in other areas of the course.

The Practical Application of Learning (PAL) allows this earlier learning to be applied to a choice of practical projects in order to convey meaning to a specific, defined, audience, and in doing so demonstrate constructional and technical ability. Whilst it is an opportunity to apply previous learning, it is also the opportunity to develop new learning in the practical arena, and practise skills that are used in all areas of the film industry to make films.

NOTEBOX . . .

PAL: film form

A number of macro and micro aspects can be applied directly to the construction of a practical piece of work:

Narrative – a structuring device, both across a whole film and across a single scene or sequence. The ordering of information within a practical piece of work is of vital significance to how a spectator will make meaning from it.

Genre – the use of signifying devices within a practical piece of work that are recognizable as belonging to a group of films. Use of codes and conventions will help structure a work and ensure the spectator views it in terms of other similar films.

Cinematography, editing, mise en scène, performance, and sound – these aspects are all directly manipulated either by technicians or by the director in order to maximize the opportunity to ensure an audience is exposed to an intended meaning. These are elements that are absolutely in the control of a filmmaker: there should be nothing in a shot, scene, sequence, or film, that is there accidentally, as all these ingredients should have been within the filmmakers' control.

In the PAL there are three options for the creation of practical work, each in equal value to another, and each developing and demanding particular skill bases:

- Screenplay: the opportunity to script a key sequence from an imagined film, where activity is the key and where dialogue is kept to a minimum. What is important here is that the story is treated *cinematically*, in that it is clear that this is a story for the screen and not just a play or novel that happens to be in screenplay form.
- Storyboard (photographed or drawn): the opportunity to sketch out how a movie sequence would look as it moves from shot to shot. Whilst drawing or photographic skills are not being judged here (so stick men and less than representative photos are accepted), framing is absolutely vital. Using lens-based media to produce a storyboard clearly allows the maker to get a better understanding of how things actually look within a frame, and how they relate to other frames. The individual frames are important, but the transitions between frames – and the interplay between frames are equally important.
- Video production: the opportunity to put together a short (1–2 minute) sequence and filmically apply both macro and micro learning. If this is made by a group, then each group member must take responsibility for a particular micro component relevant to their role. It is accepted that there will be varying quality between productions (some may be shooting on a domestic VHS camera whilst others may be using Digi-Beta and a Steadicam rig), but it is the approach to the role and the achievement despite any limitations that are significant here.

Accompanying each of these three options are two pieces of written work that give the practical production work a context, and offer a reflection on intentions and on the finished work. The 'cinematic ideas' is the first piece of work that goes towards the project and sets out to outline intended approaches and devices, along with a brief (100-word maximum) summary of the imagined film from which the sequence comes.

At the other end of the process, after the production work is completed, comes the 'evaluation' where the filmmaker evaluates the success of the production work in making meaning.

These practical skills developed in the PAL are the building blocks of filmmaking, and as such are the essential tools for making meaning. Each contributes to the production line that is filmmaking – script, storyboard, film – and all stem from the most important fundamental: the idea.

NOTEBOX . . .

The idea

The idea is the key starting point for any practical work and as such it is worth spending some time working through an idea to make it as good as it can get.

An idea initially develops into an outline for a story, and as such may well begin to grow characters. At this stage it is important to keep control of the idea to stop it spiralling off into unstructured developments. This can be done very easily by applying a simple set of questions:

1 What is the situation? This opens the story and may well be disrupted.
2 Whose situation is it? This defines the lead character (or protagonist).
3 What is the central quest? This relates to the main body of the story and is often defined by a lead character trying to restore what has been disrupted. This is where most conflict and drama arises in a story and is often described simply as the 'conflict'.
4 Who stands in the way of success? This defines another principal character who will be in opposition to the lead character (and is often referred to as the 'antagonist').
5 How does the quest end? Often this will be where the antagonist is defeated, and the protagonist's situation is restored. This is often called the resolution.

Once the story idea is fleshed out, it is then important to check whether or not it is actually a filmic idea.

If it is set in one room with two characters talking to each other for 90 minutes then it may be better placed on the stage.

If it involves considerable internal monologue (the characters' thoughts rather than their actions or conversations) then it may well make a better novel or short story.

Filmic ideas are ones that involve action – not necessarily fights and car chases, but rather activity – characters *doing* things on screen. Activity is visual, and this is most important in film stories. Activity tells an audience not only about the events, but about the characters performing those events. A character who dashes off a perfect love letter is defined by the activity in the same way as

the character who spends the scene crossing lines out, screwing up paper and throwing it to the floor, and sitting with pen in mouth looking skyward. Similarly the character of a bank robber is defined by their actions – the hooded figure that bludgeons a customer to the floor to make a point is different from the suited robber who passes a note calmly to a bank clerk and walks away with the money without the customers even realising a robbery is taking place.

CINEMATIC IDEAS

This piece of paperwork is extremely important not only in explaining the meanings you are trying to develop and the learning you are applying in one of the three practical activities, but also in getting your thoughts in order to undertake the practical activity. As such it is possibly the most important assessed element. It is always advisable to head this with an appropriate title for the film: 'Galaxy Wars' does far more to locate a film in its genre and narrative form than 'Imaginary Film', and shows that the creator has genuinely thought about the nature of the film, and is making the effort to engage with the task.

The cinematic ideas should begin with a very brief (no more than 100 words) summary of the imagined film from which the sequence comes that is to be scripted, story-boarded, or filmed. This should be a straightforward telling of the story, and not the cliff-hanger type synopsis found on the back of a DVD or video box. It should identify the principal characters and should outline the situation, conflict and resolution of the story. This is the context for the sequence selected for creating, and so should allow the marker the opportunity to place the sequence in relation to the rest of the imagined film.

Following this contextualizing summary, the focus switches from the overview to the specific, from the film in general to the chosen sequence in particular. It is worth noting at the start where the sequence comes in the overall order of the film, and then identify the micro and macro elements involved in its production.

NOTEBOX . . .

For groups carrying out a video project it should be noted that each group member's cinematic ideas should be different: it should be *their* summary of the film (not a combined group summary) and the macro and micro elements should relate to *each* member's chosen focus and role (so, for example, the camera operator may well look at cinematography and/or mise en scène).

If the film has been identified as a genre film then it would be sensible to highlight how genre-specific macro and micro elements will appear and shape the sequence.

Similarly, if the film is adopting a particular style (documentary realism for example) then the sequence should reflect this, particularly in the micro elements as these will be more identifiable in the sequence.

It is worth writing a number of drafts of the cinematic ideas in order to *craft* the words to maximize the potential for success. This also serves to encourage a way of thinking about the sequence and the film as a whole that sees it not as fixed as soon as the first idea hits the page, but as fluid and continually developing. Drafting the cinematic ideas allows each idea to be questioned, challenged, and weighed against the others in the piece, resulting in only the strongest, most focused remaining in place.

NOTEBOX . . .

Example cinematic ideas – *The Crossing*

This is a crime thriller set in a modern Eastern European republic. A British diplomat's visiting teenage son, Mike Harrington witnesses a horrific 'hit' on an American businessman. Scheduled to testify against the gangsters, the embassy is bombed and Mike's family killed. Emerging from the wreckage with American journalist Patty Flyte, both are pursued by secret police, MI6, the CIA and gangsters. Betrayed by friends, unsure who to trust, they are shot at, imprisoned, chased, and nearly drowned, before reaching the border with a 'friendly' neighbouring country where they meet and destroy the crime boss (Mike's diplomat father) to make the crossing.

(99 words)

The sequence comes approximately five minutes into the film after the initial set-up of locations, characters and relationships usual in such genre films. It begins with Mike walking across a brightly lit grand square, noticeably filled with military personnel and checkpoints to indicate that it is a military state and dangerous. Initially the shots are framed in ELS and LS to establish the location and orientate the viewer, but also to depict Mike as insignificant within the scale of the scene. Occasionally the camera shot will cut to a hand-held shot from a high angle to suggest that someone is watching the events from a building. Lens flare may be used to imply 'realism'.

As Mike reaches a café in the centre of the square and buys an ice-cream we first see the American businessman sitting at a table in the rearground, highlighted by a shaft of sunlight, and dressed in a lighter suit than anyone else nearby to make him stand out in the crowd. At this point the high angle ELS zooms in on the scene to frame the man, de-focusing and then re-focusing to suggest the POV is from someone who is using a lens (perhaps a rifle sight?). As the gangster's car screeches onto the square, the shots from here change to become MS, CU, and BCU, except for the final shot which reverts to ELS to show the carnage.

The editing of this sequence will be conventional in terms of the genre, with longer timed shots fitting the ELS and LS, and shorter timed shots fitting the MS, CU, and ECU. There will be a rhythm to the timing, and this will build gradually with shots becoming progressively shorter as the events get nastier. The shots of the American businessman getting shot will be rendered in slow-motion – usual in this genre. The final ELS shot of the scene will be one of the longest to allow the spectator to take in the enormity of what Mike has witnessed.

The sound will be naturalistic, and relatively quiet with a city atmosphere at the beginning. When the gangsters arrive, however, it will become loud to contrast, and the diegetic classical music playing on the café radio will become a non-diegetic theme that will play over the violence, again as a genre reference (like in *Carlito's Way*) and to counterpoint the scene.

(396 words – total 495 words)

You should notice that the above example (*The Crossing*) is divided between story and techniques, and that the first paragraph (the summary) not only offers the situation, characters, quest and resolution (all in 99 words), but also sets a clear context for the sequence that is mapped out in the succeeding paragraphs. These paragraphs reference both macro (genre and narrative) and micro aspects in relation to particular points in the sequence. It is worth relating chosen aspects to specific points as this makes it clearer for the reader to imagine how they will work, but also demonstrates that the techniques employed have been thought through and located in the sequence, and so have clear relevance. The micro aspects considered include cinematography (lighting and camera), mise en scène (location and dress), sound (both diegetic and non-diegetic), and editing (pace, duration, rhythm).

KEY TERM

DIEGETIC SOUND Diegetic sound is the sound that is heard in the fictional world, the sound that the characters in that world can hear. Most diegetic sound is not recorded 'on location' but is fabricated and 'dubbed' on to the film by sound designers and 'foley artists' (people who generate sound effects such as cutting into a cabbage to make the sound of someone being guillotined).

KEY TERM

NON-DIEGETIC SOUND This is the sound that is outside the fictional world, and that characters in the fictional world cannot hear. This would include overlays of soundtrack music and any voice-over narration.

KEY TERM

CONTRAPUNTAL SOUND This is a great technique where the sound is not directly related to the image, but when placed together an additional meaning (or depth of meaning) is created. Thus the sound of a boxing match playing on a television in shot becomes more significant when the person watching the match walks into another room and begins beating an elderly person in there. The sound carried across from the television to the room where the beating is taking place is in counterpoint to the image of the abuse, yet serves to make a bigger statement about violence in general. It may be that a mix of contrapuntal sound and the diegetic sound of the beating may heighten this statement further.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Look at a sequence of activity from a film that is familiar to you. What genre codes and conventions are built into it? How are they conveyed? How is the sequence structured? What does this structure do in terms of storytelling?
- Under the micro headings of cinematography, editing, mise en scène, performance, and sound, list the significant features of this sequence. Do you notice that one heading has more features listed? Why do you think this is?
- Write out the cinematic ideas for the sequence you have looked at. Avoid re-telling the story. What macro aspects can you highlight? Which particular micro aspects are important?

THE SCREENPLAY

Screenplay writing is a lengthy and complex process, with a feature film taking anything from six weeks to six months of intensive work to produce a decent first draft, and up to two years to get to a stage where the script could go into production. Importantly, it is the screenplay that sets all other activities in motion, from storyboarding, through casting, through production, distribution, and exhibition, to a spectator telling someone what a great (or lousy) film they saw last night.

Feature screenplays are largely broken down into 'acts' (units of action in which the story is following a particular path). The most common structures for screenplays revolve around either a three-act structure (beginning/establishing, middle/developing, end/concluding) or a five-act structure (set up, development, recognition, crisis, resolution), with each act broken up into sequences, which in turn are made up of scenes (small units of action, usually located in one place). Each scene, no matter how small can also be further broken down into set-up, development, and conclusion.

Screenplays are inhabited by three-dimensional characters who have past histories, have ambitions, have problems, and have relationships. These characters have internal

aspects (beliefs, hopes, fears, dreams, opinions, etc.) that are shown through their external actions: the hardened ruthless criminal who stops to pick up and return a child's dropped teddy bear; the cop whose hand shakes when he points his gun at a suspect; the doctor who unlocks the desk draw at the end of the day, pours a large whiskey, and stares at it without drinking. Internal characteristics, that are the essence of novel writing, are of no use to the screenwriter unless they can be externalized, unless they can become an action, a look, a gesture, or expression, which conveys this internal aspect.

Whilst dialogue is a key feature of screenplay writing and of characterization, it is an aspect that is often over-relied on to 'tell' the story. Good screenplays do not tell the story. They 'show' the story through the actions and interactions of the characters populating them, and in doing so reveal more by relying on the audience to 'fill the blanks'.

There are many forms to a screenplay but the most fall into a standard, industry-wide layout that indicates a professional approach:

12. EXT. LARGE EASTERN EUROPEAN SQUARE. DAY. 12.

The square is busy with people on their lunch hours, exiting the imposing embassy buildings, meeting friends, talking on mobiles, clutching their lunch bags, sitting at café tables, and rushing, forcing a sandwich down as they hurry through. SOLDIERS and POLICE in ones and twos also cross the square, but with more purpose. At either end of the row of embassies sits a sandbagged barricaded checkpoint through which a steady trickle of vehicles and pedestrians pass.

MIKE HARRINGTON jumps the last three steps of the British Embassy, and nearly lands on COLONEL INCHALYKA, a heavy-set, hardened-faced, giant, who pats him gently away with his huge hands, tutting a caution.

MIKE HARRINGTON

(*apologetic*)

Less speed! Sorry Colonel!

The colonel smiles briefly as he continues up the marble steps into the embassy. A brief flash from an upper-story window catches his eye and holds him momentarily. Shrugging it off he continues.

Mike waits on the pavement as an Army APC rumbles past, crushing a Coke can with a BANG. Mike sees this, licks his lips, and crosses onto the Square, towards the café.

The first thing you should notice is that scenes are numbered consecutively through the screenplay, starting from scene 1. Sometimes if the writer intends the camera to follow the character from one location to another in a continuous movement then a sequence of scenes may be numbered 1a, 1b, etc. You will also notice that there are no specific camera instructions included in the script: camera decisions are not made by screenwriters – they are made by directors and directors of photography who interpret the 'master scene script'. A good screenwriter will be able to write action to suggest a particular shot, which a good director or director of photography will be able to visualize from the description. In the PAL however, it is accepted that there may be a desire to indicate camera shots and angles, and delivering a 'shooting script' will not disadvantage you.

ACTIVITY . . .

- In the screenplay extract above what camera shots do you think the writer had in mind? How would you sequence the shots for the section involving Colonel Inchalyka? How would you sequence the shots for the section where the army APC is passing?
- In a group make up individual shot listings (LS, MS, CU, etc.) for the screenplay extract. Sequence the shots so that they 'flow'. Consider the timing of each shot, and the duration of the sequence as a whole.
- Compare sequences. Are there any individual shots that are the same (or roughly the same)? Are there any combinations of shots that are the same? Are the shot durations similar? Are the sequence durations similar? Can you account for any similarities?

The scene number is at the beginning of a line of essential information, called the 'slug line', which is always written in upper-case. Here, scene number is followed by the designation of INT (Interior) or EXT (Exterior), the location, and whether day or night (sometimes this may be more specific, but realistically this is simply an indication of what lighting set-up will be needed, and this falls easily into these two categories). It is important that slug line conventions are adhered to as these enable the production crew to do their jobs easily.

Following the slug line comes the 'action descriptor'. This usually consists of a few lines to 'set the scene', but in an activity scene such as the one above it may extend to several paragraphs or even a whole scene. Within this character names are capitalized for their first appearance, but are in lower-case after that. Background characters remain in lower-case unless they are significant to the scene (such as the soldiers and the police). When characters are introduced for the first time they are usually accompanied by a brief physical description. This is only repeated subsequently when there has been a dramatic change (when Mike Harrington later emerges from the ruins of the bombed embassy for example).

The action descriptor should try to capture not only the look of the scene (in terms of mise en scène, lighting, and general mood), but the sound also, and specific sounds that are important are also capitalized as a clue for the sound crew to ensure they are included (the Coke can popping with a BANG is an example of this).

Screenwriters should always be wary of writing something that cannot be physically expressed – a thought for example. In the extract above Mike looks at the Coke can exploding, licks his lips, and then moves towards the café. From this the audience can infer his thirst. Other than inferring this, the only other way to tell the audience he is thirsty would be for Mike to have a conversation with someone about it (*with someone* as opposed to with himself, which is really the worst kind of exposition).

Dialogue is always separated from action description by a double space and is always indented (set in from the margins at each end) to ensure it is seen as dialogue and not description. The speaker's name is always centred and capitalized, and may have an indication of the tone of the speech centred underneath, bracketed and in italics. Speech itself should always be short – listen to a conversation in progress and you will discover that it is full of interruptions, digressions, unfinished sentences, pauses, etc.

You should see from the screenplay extract that dialogue may be kept fairly limited in an activity sequence, since it is the action that will carry the scene and the information. Already the audience has a sense of who Colonel Inchalyka is, and what he is like, purely from his reaction to a teenager nearly colliding with him. His internal aspects are revealed through his external actions, and more specifically this is in an incident that is relatively inconsequential to the story or plot of the film. Colonel Inchalyka is introduced here in a sequence whose sole purpose is to introduce him and indicate that he is known to Mike Harrington (and hence probably significant to the later development of the plot). Without the need to introduce this character, and without the need to introduce a relationship, the sequence of Mike jumping down the steps of the embassy could be cut.

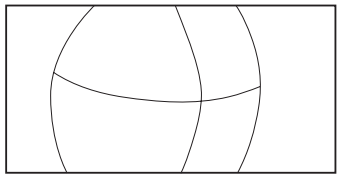
ACTIVITY . . .

- Consider how Colonel Inchalyka was introduced in the screenplay extract. What do you learn about him, both physically and in terms of character? Does his physical appearance influence the view of his character?
- At what other points in the scene could Colonel Inchalyka have been introduced? Choose one and re-write the sequence. What difference has it made to the meaning(s) produced by the sequence? Has it changed what is learnt about the colonel? Has it changed the relationship between the colonel and Mike?

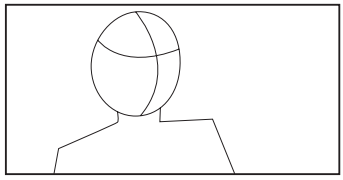
THE STORYBOARD

The purpose of the storyboard is to photograph or draw out each and every shot of a film with a list of key information written underneath, so that a director can see how the finished film will look before a single frame is shot. This allows him or her to calculate the technical requirements of a shoot, and gives an opportunity for the director to revise sequences that seemed like a good approach when thinking the story through, but seem less possible or less appropriate with pictures in place.

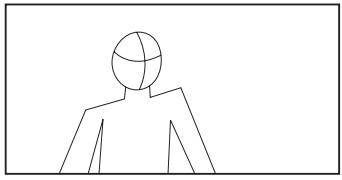
The storyboard is made up from a set of 'standard' shot sizes each with an accompanying abbreviation:



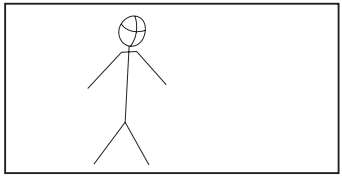
ECU *or* BCU: *extreme or big close up*
So close that only part of the subject is in view (eyes, mouth, etc.).



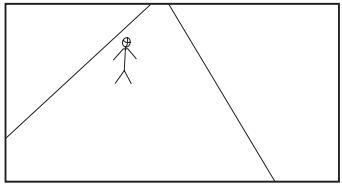
CU: *close up*
Close enough to see detail on a subject without losing a sense of the subject as a whole (chest to top of head).



MS: *mid shot*
Describes a position somewhere between LS and CU (waist to top of head).



LS: *long shot*
Usually describing a subject where you can see all of it in shot (head to toe if it is a person).



ELS: *extreme long shot*
Describing a subject that is placed well within its setting. In the case of a person could be a little beyond LS and out to infinity (most of the opening of *Lawrence of Arabia* is in ELS).

Between these shot descriptors are a range of other shots (such as MLS and MCU) which help to describe the photographed or drawn images, and which help the production crew make sense of the requirements for a shoot. Other abbreviations and terms that are likely to be found on a storyboard include:

H/A	High angle	Track/dolly	Move camera on wheeled platform
L/A	Low angle	Crab	Sideways move
POV	Point of view	Pull focus	Change what is focused on
2-shot	Two people in shot	Fade	Shot fades in/out
OTS	Over the shoulder	Dissolve	Shot fades out as another fades in underneath

This terminology offers an industry shorthand that enables all the crew to use the same document to relate their part of the process to an overall objective. Apart from a picture and the camera descriptions, the storyboard should also contain other relevant information such as:

Shot number Each shot in the storyboard must be numbered so that the intended sequence of shots can be followed. Although this is only a minor detail it can have serious consequences for shooting and editing if it is not adhered to.

Action A brief description of what is happening in the shot allows one frame to be used for the whole shot, even though there may be much movement within the shot. If it is radically different from beginning of the shot to the end, or if there is camera movement that results in radically different framing, then the shot may be drawn across a number of storyboard frames (numbered a, b, c, etc.).

Camera This should not only indicate shot size and angle but should also give a clear sense of what is being framed.

Dialogue Single lines may be written but for longer speeches just the first and last few words covered by the shot are included to save space (Morgan: 'Hell no, I'd never . . . no sir, never!')

Sound FX This indicates specific sounds that will stand out against the general soundscape; ones that the makers wish to draw attention to.

Sound atmos The overall background 'atmosphere' of a fictionalized location is important in capturing the nature of the place.

Sound music This relates largely to non-diegetic music; the soundtrack that has been placed on the film to create an emotional response. It may include diegetic music if it transforms into non-diegetic sound.

Shot duration This is a vital piece of information as it gives the storyboard rhythm and indicates that the filmmakers have considered the shot-to-shot relationships and the overall relationship of individual shots to the timing of the film as a whole. It is important not only to be able to calculate how long an action may take, but also how long it should take on screen.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Look at a one-minute-long film extract that you are familiar with. Using the list above analyse the way the extract has been constructed.
- What do you notice about the way in which shot size and angle varies?
- What do you notice about the way each shot deals with movement within the frame?
- Generally what framing is used for dialogue?
- How are sound FX, atmos, and music related? What does the combination achieve?
- Is there a rhythm to the extract? Do you notice anything about the timings? Do they relate to the shot sizes? What does the rhythm do for the extract?

On pages 108 and 109 you will see two storyboarded extracts from *The Crossing*, one photographed and one drawn. It should become clear how the pictures and text support each other and how they aid the construction of meaning.

VIDEO PRODUCTION

Essentially the making of a video sequence can be divided into three distinct areas: pre-production (planning), production (shooting) and post-production (editing). Both scripting and storyboarding come into the pre-production stage, and so can be seen as primary functions that have to occur before any other pre-production stage can happen.

Pre-production

Even a short sequence can take an enormous amount of planning, and the time involved in organizing a shoot should not be underestimated. Other than scripting and storyboarding the essential tasks in pre-production are casting, location scouting, budgeting, scheduling, and rehearsing. If each one is carefully managed, then it is likely that the shoot will go relatively smoothly. If one area is ignored, then it can easily impede or even prove disastrous for a shoot.

- Casting: the difficulties of finding any actors yet alone talented ones are well understood, but there are some things that can be done to mitigate against circumstance. First it is important to get the right person for the right role – no point in casting a 17-year-old as the aging father of a 15-year-old – and the right 'look' can cover many casting problems. If possible look to performing arts groups, or local amateur dramatics companies, as they will have had some acting experience, though not necessarily for the cinematic medium. Try to ensure there is real choice in casting and that it is not done merely as an exercise in first come first served.

Shot no. 9

Action: There is slight movement behind the open window. Sunlight catches something inside and a reflection flashes briefly out.

Camera: L/A LS window

Dialogue: N/A

Sound FX: N/A

Sound atmos: City square

Sound music: N/A

Shot duration: (2 seconds)

Shot no. 10

Action: The flash catches Colonel Inchalyka's eyes and he looks up to the window.

Camera: MS (side) Colonel Inchalyka on embassy steps

Dialogue: N/A

Sound FX: N/A

Sound atmos: City square

Sound music: N/A

Shot duration: (2 seconds)

Shot no. 11

Action: Colonel Inchalyka scans the building from where the flash came. Seeing nothing he hesitates, then shrugs it off.

Camera: H/A ECU Colonel Inchalyka's eyes scan the building's windows.

Dialogue: N/A

Sound FX: N/A

Sound atmos: City square

Shot duration: (3 seconds)

Figure 5.1 *Three storyboard video shots*
Source: Freddie Gaffney

Shot no.: 22

Action: A gangster stands on a table spraying the square with bullets.

Camera: MCU (front) gangster firing from left to right, shells ejecting sideways. SLO-MO

Dialogue: N/A

Sound FX: LOUD machine-gun fire

Sound atmos: Panicked city square

Sound music: Low orchestral (under)

Shot duration: (6 seconds)

Shot No.: 23

Action: The American businessman shelters behind an overturned table as the machine-gun fire rattles around him

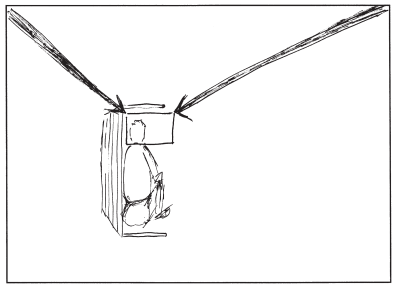
Camera: MS (side) American businessman sits huddled against the underside of an overturned table.

Dialogue: N/A

Sound FX: Machine-gun fire

Sound atmos: Panicked city square

Sound music: Low orchestral (under)



Shot no.: 24

Action: The American businessman shelters nervously behind a table, desperately looking for a way out of the carnage.

Camera: H/A LS ZOOM, PAN WITH, DE-FOCUS, and RE-FOCUS to CU back of American businessman's head, looking rapidly around. CUT TO BLACK.

Dialogue: N/A

Sound FX: Distant machine-gun fire ending with loud retort of single rifle shot

Sound atmos: Distant panicked city square

Sound music: Rising orchestral (under)

Shot duration: (6 seconds)

Figure 5.2 *Three storyboard sketch shots*
Source: Freddie Gaffney

- Location scouting: many productions are marred by using the wrong, or inappropriate locations, and again, with some foresight and preparation this should never be a problem. Discussions with the screenwriter at an early stage can head off script decisions that are almost certain to prove a location nightmare – outside a spaceship in mid-flight; a Transylvanian castle; inside the cabin of a commercial jet airliner, etc. However, with a little effort one location can become another: a local church can become the Vatican with some Italian signage, some Latin hymns added in, and a couple of extras speaking Italian in the background. Locations that are secured should be confirmed with time and date, preferably in writing, and preferably at least a week in advance of shooting.
- Budgeting: this is not an essential component of this task, but it is worth remembering that in group productions money is often the source of argument, so it may be worth establishing a budget from the start, and establishing who is going to contribute what to it. If the budget starts to run away from the production, then it is important that this is brought to everyone's attention as soon as possible.
- Scheduling: a well scheduled shoot is one where everyone knows when and where they are supposed to be, how long they will be there, and what they are supposed to be doing. It is wise to ensure that a schedule over-estimates the amount of time it takes to travel to a location, and the amount of time the shoot itself will take – people will thank you if they finish early, but curse you for running late. On average a production should be able to shoot between 12–18 well crafted, considered shots per eight-hour day on location, and usually slightly less if they are in the studio or have significant lighting set-ups. It is worth spending some time preparing 'call-sheets' for cast and crew, detailing daily arrangements and contact information.
- Rehearsing: the area least likely to be considered is possibly one of the most important. Rehearsals are not only a way of working the script through with actors, but they are also a way of ensuring a production team gets into the rhythm of working with each other.

Production

Production is unquestionably a team effort, and it is essential that each team member has a defined role and area of responsibility. A small crew is likely to have the following production roles:

- Director: responsible for the overall construction of the work and for ensuring that both actors and crew perform to their best. The dual role means that the primary responsibility of getting the actors to deliver a performance is matched by the need to direct the crew to ensure that this performance is captured in the best possible manner. The director is likely to choose performance as a focus area, but may also look to mise en scène in structuring the 'look' of a finished sequence.
- Cinematographer or director of photography: is responsible for capturing the image to film (or more likely tape), and will be focused on camera and lighting (though again may focus on mise en scène). The skill here is in manipulating camera controls and lighting techniques to create (and enhance) the director's vision.

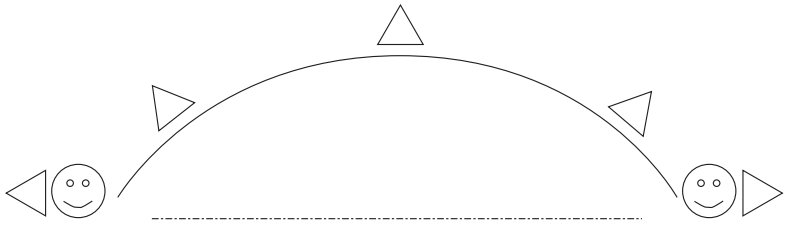
- Art director: directly responsible for set dressing, set design, props and costume, and as such entirely focused on mise en scène.
- Sound recordist: responsible both for location sound and for providing sound intended for post-production. On set it is likely that the job will simply involve recording the purest sound possible, and being cautious of outside noise: planes flying overhead, traffic, neighbours arguing, etc..

There are some basic shooting rules that it is wise to adhere to even if they are not fully understood at this level, in order to produce material that is usable and most importantly editable. With a minimum structure in place shooting becomes a less stressful process, and the results are dramatically improved. However ignoring the simple rules of production leads to material that simply will not cut together, and well planned shoots, with all the accompanying effort, being ruined.

NOTEBOX . . .

Basic shooting rules

1. Always use a tripod to support the camera, unless you have a specific reason for wanting the shaky look that hand-held will give you. This can be dynamic in certain situations (chase sequences for example) but often it simply makes a production seem lazy or amateurish.
2. If something is wrong in shot, call 'Cut' and re-take the shot. If you accept a shot that has problems, then that will be the shot that creates problems for you in post-production.
3. Always adhere to the 30° rule. This states that to avoid 'jump cuts' (where the camera appears to lurch towards a subject or the subject appears to 'jump' position between shots) any shots that are intended to be joined with each other in editing should be shot from camera positions that have at least 30° between them.
4. Avoid cutting whilst in mid-camera movement – let the shot come to a 'rest' position as this will benefit the editing.
5. Let the camera run for five seconds prior to calling 'Action' and after calling 'Cut'. This not only serves the editing, but it also gives some 'moments' where the actors' bodies and expressions are relaxed – these are often valuable.



6 Always adhere to the 180° rule. This rule is often complex to understand and even more complex to implement. The 'line of action' is an imaginary line – usually between two people, but it can run through one person – that the camera must stay one side of. The camera can travel anywhere on a 180° axis as long as it does not 'cross the line'; as soon as it does that then all spatial continuity is lost and editing becomes an exercise in confusion.

Post-production

Modern post-production is invariably carried out on a non-linear computer system (most commonly Avid, Final Cut, Pinnacle and Premiere) which ingests digitized material (and on some systems analogue material), and facilitates not only basic assembly editing, but the addition of effects, sound editing, and the use of corrective tools such as grading. It is likely that a single editor will work through the shot material to produce a final cut of the sequence, and may be working from a storyboard, or more actively with a director.

The editor's role is one that should be governed by process in order for him or her to maximize creativity. This process involves digitizing material and importing it into the chosen editing programme; adding clips to a timeline to construct the sequence; trimming clips to tighten the sequence; laying audio tracks; laying any necessary video and audio effects; correcting any shot-to-shot problems (such as colour correction); creating title and credit sequences; and finally dubbing the finished product off to disc or tape.

Editors have a range of creative options open to them that determine the nature of the finished piece. Like all options these should be used sparingly to enhance the sequence and only when appropriate.

NOTEBOX . . .

Basic options in editing

Dissolve: an image fades out as another fades in, making a connection between the two (girlfriend fades out as mother fades in).

Fade: often to black but can be to any colour. The duration of screen time given over to the fade and the end colour can suggest particular meanings.

Graphic match: two shots can be connected through shapes within the frame (a clock matched to a car wheel).

Match on action: two shots can be connected by the replication of an action across each (character begins putting drink down in seedy Soho bar, and cuts to drink reaching bar counter of Caribbean beach bar).

Montage: placing one image next to another creates meaning (person's face with apple pie = hungry, person's face with coffin = sadness).

EVALUATION

The area of a PAL that is often weakest is the evaluation, and like the cinematic ideas section it too can benefit from careful development, editing, and drafting. The evaluation should consider both process and product, and should show a clear awareness of the audience and their reaction(s) to the finished work, and should do this in approximately 500 words.

It is often worthwhile stating who the intended audience was for the sequence, as this then allows some element of testing (letting a representative of that audience – family member, friend, teacher – see the finished piece and express their responses to it) and then some reflection on their responses. This in turn can lead to a consideration of intended meanings and their production, which then focuses the piece on process and techniques. A personal response to the work can make a suitable conclusion to the evaluation.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Show your finished screenplay/storyboard/film to a group of people who are representative of your target audience. Try (if appropriate) to get a wide range of ages, genders, and social groupings. Get them to discuss the work as a group, and shape the discussion with reference to the macro and micro focus of the piece.
- Revise the work in the light of their comments.
- Design a questionnaire to test the revised work on an audience. Focus the questions on issues raised in the previous discussion.
- Show the revised work to the same group, and get them to complete the questionnaire.
- Use the questionnaire results to inform any final revision of the work.
- Look at the finished work yourself and fill in one of your own questionnaires. How do your results compare with those offered by your audience?

NOTEBOX . . .

Example evaluation – screenplay *The Crossing*

I wrote my screenplay for an audience of 18–25 year olds as they are in the appropriate age group for thrillers and the content of the film is likely to mean that it will secure an 18 certificate from the BBFC. I titled it *The Crossing* as this has several meanings including referencing the border crossing, double crossing, and the rite-of-passage crossing for the central character. I based this character on an amalgamation of several of my friends in an attempt to reach my target audience better.

The script was given to a selection of my target audience and they gave me some very positive responses. Thankfully they were all surprised that Mike's father turned out not only to be alive but to be the crime boss. Most said they were shocked by this and by his attempts to kill his own son, and I was happy that my intended meaning had been understood. What surprised me however, was that the majority of people believed Colonel Inchalyka was the bad guy – when I worked hard to signpost his honesty and integrity. Maybe I was too subtle, or maybe my audience has a genre-based response to such characters that means they are automatically suspicious of them. Perhaps I should have made Colonel Inchalyka a woman instead?

The oldest in my target audience felt that Mike appeared too grown up for his age and dealt with all the terrible situations he found himself in too well. I am not sure that this is the case and none of the other audience members commented on this.

To help me write the screenplay I looked at several books, and found the Film Education booklet on screenwriting very useful in terms of working through the idea and structuring the script. Making the characters seem real without letting them speak too much was difficult and I kept having to invent ways of showing, not telling. The gunfight sequence was fun to do and I decided to use the techniques I have seen in other films such as the work of John Woo and Sam Peckinpah.

I wrote three drafts of the screenplay, showing each to my teacher (who is outside my target age group) and to a friend who is in my target audience. My teacher was able to offer some good advice, but my friend seemed to think each version was OK, and I didn't find much of use in his comments. Overall I am very happy with the finished piece and I feel I have learnt a lot about the nature of storytelling and the structure of screenplays. I have also learnt that I can apply learning from academic areas of the course to the practical areas, and this has increased my enjoyment of both. I'm looking forward to writing the rest of *The Crossing*, especially in the light of what is on the menu for my A2 studies.

(487 words)

FURTHER READING

Scriptwriting

Gaffney, F. (2006) *Screenwriting*, London: Auteur.

Hicks, N. (1996) *Screenwriting 101*, Oxford: Wiese.

Storyboarding

Begleiter, M. (2001) *From Word to Image: Storyboarding and the Filmmaking Process*, Oxford: Wiese.

Fraioli, J. (2000) *Storyboarding 101*, Oxford: Wiese.

Production

Jones, C. and Jolliffe, G. (1996) *The Guerrilla Film Maker's Handbook*, London: Cassell.

Katz, S. (1991) *Film Directing Shot by Shot*, Oxford: Wiese.

USEFUL WEBSITES

http://www.cyberfilmschool.com (cyber film school: Pro-end DV filmmaking site)

http://www.filmundergound.com (film underground: DV filmmaking site)

http://www.script-o-rama.com (Drew's scriptorama: script and screenwriting site)

http://www.themakingof.com (the making of Hollywood's hit movies)

http://w3.tvi.cc.nm.us/~jvelez/MMS170/storyboard (storyboarding: history, purpose, and techniques)

PART 2

PRODUCERS AND AUDIENCES – HOLLYWOOD AND BRITISH CINEMA (FS2)

6 FILMS AS PRODUCTS

This chapter will:

- encourage you to see films as products of a global industry dominated by Hollywood;
- outline the stages that make up film production, or the actual making of the film;
- outline the stages in the commercial process that come after the film has been made, essentially distribution, marketing and exhibition;
- encourage you to try to follow through the process behind bringing one of your own favourite films to the screen.

NOTEBOX . . .

This section will be particularly relevant to FS2 – Producers and Audiences: Hollywood and British Cinema for the WJEC's AS in Film Studies. This part of the AS course tries to get you to understand how in addition to being viewers of films, or spectators, people who watch films could also be seen as consumers. And, in relation to this approach, how films themselves could be discussed in terms of being products made in particular ways and designed to be consumed in particular ways.

THE GLOBAL AND LOCAL DIMENSIONS

The film industry reaches right around the globe. In terms of the making of films, they can be shot on location, or in film studios, all over the world. In terms of showing films, although they may initially be shown in one country or another, with the right marketing and distribution back-up they can quite quickly be seen by audiences around the world.

In studying film, you should be intensely aware of this increasingly important global dimension to film; globalization is a process that in recent years has affected films and

the film industry as much as any other commercial enterprise. However, you should also be alert to the fact that this global aspect to the industry is actually expressed and experienced locally. As a result we are able to give due consideration to the film industry as a worldwide phenomenon simply by paying careful attention to the presence of film within our everyday lives.

The magazines and newspapers we read, the TV we watch, the conversations we have with friends, the streets we walk and the shops we visit, to say nothing of the DVDs we buy and the cinemas we attend, will all announce the presence of the film industry as a worldwide commercial fact.

ACTIVITY . . .

1. Compile a list of local cinemas within say five to six miles of either your college or your home. How long has each cinema been open? Can you find out brief details for the development of each cinema? Do any local cinemas have a particularly long history? How many screens are available at each cinema?
2. What sorts of films are shown at these local cinema(s)? If there are several cinemas, do they tend to specialize in any way? Is their programme dominated by mainstream Hollywood films? Do they show what might be called 'art-house' films at any time? If so, when are they screened and how often?
3. Find out the cost of tickets. If there are several cinemas, is there much difference between prices? If so, can you see any reasons why this might be? Are there special discount times or discount deals at particular cinemas?
4. Where are the cinemas situated and why are they sited in these places? Are they in town or out of town, and why? Are they easily accessible by road? Are there any bus and/or rail stations nearby? Is car parking easily available?
5. Do they advertise their presence and what they are currently showing in local newspapers and/or on local radio? Do they offer press screenings of new films before they are shown to the public?
6. If you can, try to arrange a visit to a local multiplex (and/or smaller cinema) and interview the manager. Try to find out:

    - how the cinema decides which films it will be showing and for how long;
    - what percentage of films shown would be classified as American;
    - whether they have any deals with particular distributors or studios;
    - how they decide which advertisements and trailers to show;
    - what percentage of their takings come from the box-office;
    - what percentage of their takings come from other sources particularly food and drink.

(Perhaps you can come up with a further list of questions to ask before your visit.)

HOLLYWOOD

Alongside the type of film analysis we have undertaken with a variety films in Part 1, as film students we need to remember that the films we see at the cinema and the DVDs we watch at home are the products of this massive ongoing industrial process. In the case of most of the films we have so far considered, we have been dealing with products of Hollywood, that suburb of Los Angeles in California that has been home to the big American film studios since the early days of silent films so that the place name has itself become a shorthand term for the American industry as a whole.

KEY TERM

HOLLYWOOD As early as the 1910s the US film industry began to shift its base from the East Coast to what was essentially a place in the Californian desert, a rural area on the edge of Los Angeles. The name 'Hollywood' has, of course, become a term signifying something much more than simply a place in California.

ACTIVITY . . .

1 Consider why Hollywood might have become the American centre for industrial filmmaking. What advantages might it have offered the business initially, and later as it developed as a filmmaking centre?
2 Discuss your ideas with others, if possible.
3 Try to find time to undertake a little research to see if any of your ideas hold up to scrutiny. Basically you are trying to find out where the industry started in America and how it came to be located in Hollywood.

(The history of all of this is in a sense by the by. What is crucial is that you begin to think about film in business terms – why would a film industry interested in churning out as many film products as possible in as short a space of time as possible and for the greatest profit possible move to Hollywood? Begin to think in these terms and you will be well on the way to understanding this part of the Film Studies A level.)

STUDIOS

Most famously Hollywood has been built around studios, well-financed big-name companies in the business of making films and in the business of making money from films. *Casablanca* (1942), for example, the 'classic' wartime romantic drama set in what was seen as an exotic North African location, was made by Warner Brothers, one of the major companies operating during that phase of film history spanning the 1930s, 1940s and into the 1950s known as the studio system. Perhaps the most famous 'classic' text from the same period, *Citizen Kane* (1941), was made by another studio known as RKO, Radio-Keith-Orpheum.

NOTEBOX . . .

Casablanca (1942) was filmed and then released just as the United States was entering the Second World War and was made by Warner Brothers in an effort to encourage the country to take up the struggle against Hitler's Germany. It featured two famous stars from the period, Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman.

Citizen Kane (1941), directed by and starring Orson Welles, is one of those films that nearly always features near the top of '100 best movies ever' lists that you tend to find at regular intervals in film magazines.

The first of these studios, Warner Brothers, will be familiar to most people since it is still very much one of the major 'players' in the industry. However, you may well not have heard of the second name because RKO went out of business in 1955. It was the only one of the major studios from the period to go out of business in the face of the huge competition offered to the industry by the advent of TV. So to some extent studios come and go, although most seem to manage to be taken over or become involved in mergers rather than actually go out of business. (We will consider the studios based in Hollywood in a little more detail in a later chapter that looks specifically at 'Old and New Hollywood'.)

NOTEBOX . . .

Warner Brothers was formed as a production company in 1923 under Harry, Albert, Sam and Jack Warner. In 1927 the company introduced synchronized sound for the film *The Jazz Singer* and revolutionized the industry. They quickly took over a chain of theatres and also another production company, First National. In 1989 Warners merged with Time Inc. which then merged with Turner Broadcasting in 1996 and then with AOL in 2000 to become one of the largest media entertainment conglomerates. (See how the history of this company is built upon mergers, and also the effort to take advantage of new technologies to obtain a commercial advantage over rivals whenever possible.)

RKO (Radio-Keith-Orpheum) was formed in 1928 through a merger between RCA (Radio Corporation of America) and the Keith, Albee and Orpheum cinema chains. In 1931 the company bought Pathé's studios and distribution outlets. At this time sound was just coming in and RCA for obvious reasons felt it had useful experience in this field. By 1955 the company had been wound down and most of its assets sold off. (See how the way this company starts at a time of change for the film industry demonstrates the more usual process of mergers and takeovers.)

1: GONE WITH THE WIND
Estimated Attendance: 35 million

2: The SOUND OF MUSIC
Estimated Attendance: 30 million

3: SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS
Estimated Attendance: 28 million

4: STAR WARS
Estimated Attendance: 20.76 million

5: SPRING IN PARK LANE
Estimated Attendance: 20.5 million

6: The BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES
Estimated Attendance: 20.4 million

7: The JUNGLE BOOK
Estimated Attendance: 19.8 million

8: TITANIC
Estimated Attendance: 18.91 million

9: The WICKED LADY
Estimated Attendance: 18.4 million

10: The SEVENTH VEIL
Estimated Attendance: 17.9 million

11: HARRY POTTER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE
Estimated Attendance: 17.56 million

12: GREASE
Estimated Attendance: 17.2 million

13: SOUTH PACIFIC
Estimated Attendance: 16.5 million

14: JAWS
Estimated Attendance: 16.2 million

15: JURASSIC PARK
Estimated Attendance: 16.17 million

16: The LORD OF THE RINGS THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING
Estimated Attendance: 15.98 million

17: The COURTNEYS OF CURZON STREET
Estimated Attendance: 15.9 million

18: THUNDERBALL
Estimated Attendance: 15.6 million

19: The LORD OF THE RINGS THE RETURN OF THE KING
Estimated Attendance: 15.22 million

20: The BELLS OF ST. MARY'S
Estimated Attendance: 15.2 million

21: The TEN COMMANDMENTS
Estimated Attendance: 15 million

22: The LORD OF THE RINGS THE TWO TOWERS
Estimated Attendance: 14.4 million

23: The FULL MONTY
Estimated Attendance: 14.19 million

24: HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS
Estimated Attendance: 14.18 million

25: MARY POPPINS
Estimated Attendance: 14 million

26: The THIRD MAN
Estimated Attendance: 14 million

27: GOLDFINGER
Estimated Attendance: 13.9 million

28: STAR WARS EPISODE I THE PHANTOM MENACE
Estimated Attendance: 13.59 million

29: The BLUE LAMP
Estimated Attendance: 13.3 million

30: BEN-HUR
Estimated Attendance: 13.2 million

31: E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL
Estimated Attendance: 13.13 million

32: The GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH
Estimated Attendance: 13 million

33: The BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI
Estimated Attendance: 12.6 million

34: The SPY WHO LOVED ME
Estimated Attendance: 12.46 million

35: The GREAT CARUSO
Estimated Attendance: 12.4 million

36: DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE
Estimated Attendance: 12.2 million

37: TOY STORY 2
Estimated Attendance: 12.18 million
38: RANDOM HARVEST
Estimated Attendance: 12 million
39: The TOWERING INFERNO
Estimated Attendance: 11.78 million
40: FANNY BY GASLIGHT
Estimated Attendance: 11.7 million
41: The JOLSON STORY
Estimated Attendance: 11.6 million
42: PICCADILLY INCIDENT
Estimated Attendance: 11.5 million
43: The GUNS OF NAVARONE
Estimated Attendance: 11.4 million
44: DOCTOR ZHIVAGO
Estimated Attendance: 11.2 million
45: The STING
Estimated Attendance: 11.08 million
46: The GODFATHER
Estimated Attendance: 11 million
47: INDEPENDENCE DAY
Estimated Attendance: 10.79 million
48: CARRY ON NURSE
Estimated Attendance: 10.4 million
49: I LIVE IN GROSVENOR SQUARE
Estimated Attendance: 10.3 million
50: MRS. MINIVER
Estimated Attendance: 10.2 million
51: SUPERMAN
Estimated Attendance: 10.19 million
52: BRIDGET JONES'S DIARY
Estimated Attendance: 10.15 million
53: MONSTERS, INC.
Estimated Attendance: 9.93 million
54: A CLOCKWORK ORANGE
Estimated Attendance: 9.9 million
55: CROCODILE DUNDEE
Estimated Attendance: 9.8 million
56: FINDING NEMO
Estimated Attendance: 9.79 million
57: MEN IN BLACK
Estimated Attendance: 9.73 million
58: FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS
Estimated Attendance: 9.7 million
59: ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST
Estimated Attendance: 9.65 million
60: HIGH SOCIETY
Estimated Attendance: 9.6 million
61: MOONRAKER
Estimated Attendance: 9.41 million
62: I'M ALL RIGHT JACK
Estimated Attendance: 9.4 million
63: 49TH PARALLEL
Estimated Attendance: 9.3 million
64: LOST HORIZON
Estimated Attendance: 9.2 million
65: STAR WARS EPISODE II ATTACK OF THE CLONES
Estimated Attendance: 9.16 million
66: ONE HUNDRED AND ONE DALMATIANS
Estimated Attendance: 9.1 million
67: The EMPIRE STRIKES BACK
Estimated Attendance: 9.09 million
68: SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER
Estimated Attendance: 9.02 million
69: LIVE AND LET DIE
Estimated Attendance: 9 million
70: The GREAT DICTATOR
Estimated Attendance: 9 million
71: The BIG COUNTRY
Estimated Attendance: 9 million
72: BAMBI
Estimated Attendance: 9 million

73: REBECCA
Estimated Attendance: 8.9 million
74: OLIVER!
Estimated Attendance: 8.9 million
75: FOUR WEDDINGS AND A FUNERAL
Estimated Attendance: 8.81 million
76: GHOST
Estimated Attendance: 8.78 million
77: LOVE ACTUALLY
Estimated Attendance: 8.76 million
78: REACH FOR THE SKY
Estimated Attendance: 8.7 million
79: MY FAIR LADY
Estimated Attendance: 8.6 million
80: DIE ANOTHER DAY
Estimated Attendance: 8.58 million
81: CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND
Estimated Attendance: 8.54 million
82: The CITADEL
Estimated Attendance: 8.5 million
83: PINOCCHIO
Estimated Attendance: 8.5 million
84: A BUG'S LIFE
Estimated Attendance: 8.41 million
85: LAWRENCE OF ARABIA
Estimated Attendance: 8.4 million
86: The DAM BUSTERS
Estimated Attendance: 8.4 million
87: RETURN OF THE JEDI
Estimated Attendance: 8.35 million
88: MR. DEEDS GOES TO TOWN
Estimated Attendance: 8.3 million
89: SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON
Estimated Attendance: 8.3 million
90: YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE
Estimated Attendance: 8.3 million
91: The EXORCIST
Estimated Attendance: 8.3 million
92: The KING AND I
Estimated Attendance: 8.2 million
93: CHICKEN RUN
Estimated Attendance: 8.12 million
94: The LION KING
Estimated Attendance: 8.08 million
95: NOTTING HILL
Estimated Attendance: 8.05 million
96: The MATRIX RELOADED
Estimated Attendance: 7.96 million
97: The PRIVATE LIFE OF HENRY VIII
Estimated Attendance: 7.9 million
98: CINDERELLA
Estimated Attendance: 7.9 million
99: GLADIATOR
Estimated Attendance: 7.8 million
100: The MAGNIFICENT SEVEN
Estimated Attendance: 7.7 million

Figure 6.1 *The Ultimate Film Chart*
Source: Reproduced by permission of BFI National Library

ACTIVITY . . .

1 Research the development of TV in both the United States and Britain. It might be more interesting to try to complete this task with someone else rather than on your own.

- What are the key dates for the development of TV as a commercial enterprise?
- How rapidly did TV sets make their way into the home in both countries?
- When did satellite and cable first appear, and again how rapidly did this new technology and the accompanying increase in available channels make its way into the home?
- In what ways could TV be seen as a competitor to film and the cinema, and in what ways could it be seen as a useful parallel medium that could be used by the film industry in commercially advantageous ways?

2 Discuss your research findings with other people who have undertaken the same work. Take particular note of any ideas they have come up with that you missed.

NOTEBOX . . .

The Internet clearly represents a wonderful resource for this sort of work, but two pieces of advice:

- first, do not neglect relevant books that you might perhaps find in the media studies section within a library;
- and second, undertaking Internet searches does not absolve you from the responsibility of reading carefully what you find and extracting thoughtfully the particular information you require.

KEY TERM

TELEVISION This might perhaps at first seem a strange choice of key term when considering cinema and film. However, TV is clearly in the business of screening staged film dramas and from this perspective is in immediate competition with cinema. On the other hand, since TV has provided a ready-made screen in every home since the 1960s the potential of a further space in which to show film products also becomes apparent. And when we reach the era of first video and then DVD, these products depend entirely for their success or otherwise upon people having access to screens within as wide a variety of places as possible.

FILMS AS COMMERCIAL PRODUCTS

If you pick up a DVD copy of *Citizen Kane* today you will see that it is marketed by Universal and so, despite the fact that the company originally responsible for making it no longer exists, as a commercial product it continues to this day to be a valuable commodity capable of making money for whoever owns it. If you have more recent films at home and look carefully at the packaging you will be able to see a logo or a series of logos proclaiming the company or companies responsible for distributing these products. For example, pick up a copy of *Collateral* (Mann, 2004) and you will see it has been brought to you by a company called Paramount, which as with Warners will in all likelihood be a familiar name to you.

ACTIVITY . . .

1 Research the development of VHS and DVD in both the United States and Britain. Again, it might be more interesting to try to complete this task with someone else rather than on your own.

- What are the key dates for the development of these two formats as commercial enterprises?
- How rapidly did video recorders and DVD players make their way into the home in both countries?
- In what ways have these two technological developments been important for organizations involved in marketing old films like *Casablanca* and *Citizen Kane*?

2 After you have considered this on your own and perhaps with someone you have been working with, try to discuss your ideas with other people comparing the ideas you have come up with.

KEY TERM

VHS Video Home System, Matsushita's video tape format which became the home norm for recording after overcoming its commercial rival, Sony's Betamax system, in the 1980s.

KEY TERM

DVD Digital Versatile Disc, the system that has now almost replaced VHS video. Discs can hold much more information than video tapes (providing the possibility for all sorts of 'extras' to be included alongside the main film) and offer a higher quality image.

ADAPTABILITY OF THE FILM INDUSTRY

Perhaps the key to understanding the success of Hollywood over the past 100 years is to recognize the way in which it has always demonstrated an incredible ability to adapt to changing business circumstances. At heart the mainstream American film industry has recognized that what it is offering the public is a product and that its success depends upon adapting that product to a constantly changing market. Hollywood has continually managed to find ways to embrace new technologies such as those mentioned above.

O*n the Waterfront* (Kazan, 1954), an early film starring Marlon Brando, was made during a period when the American industry was facing perhaps its major challenge. It needed to re-organize itself in the face of competition from the then stunning new technology of TV. Studios were beginning to use independent producers; they would finance a one-off project for one of these producers and then distribute the resulting films. This meant they no longer had the ongoing, week in, week out expense of staffing and running studio production facilities. The package of business arrangements (cast and crew to be signed up and paid for a given period, clearance for filming at various locations to be obtained, studio space to be booked for filming on set, editing facilities to be lined up, etc.) necessary to complete the O*n the Waterfront* project was organized by independent producer, Sam Spiegel, who then released the finished product through Columbia. It was a relatively low budget film being made for just $800,000 on a tight 35-day shooting schedule but made $9.5 million at the box office when first released.

NOTEBOX . . .

Keep looking for parallels between anything you find out about Hollywood in the past and Hollywood today. O*n the Waterfront* amounts to a low budget, high profit product: today massive studios like Twentieth Century Fox set up small in-house low budget filmmaking companies like Fox Searchlight precisely because in percentage terms films that are (relatively) cheap to make can produce high percentage profits. (In simple terms, making $2 million profit on a $100 million outlay is one thing but making $2 million on a $20 million outlay is a much better percentage return and thus a better business proposition.)

In the face of continued competition from TV and changing leisure patterns, the industry continued to lose ground during the 1960s and 1970s, but in general Hollywood continued to maintain its recognition of film as a commercial product. In the mid-1970s during a time of continuing difficulties for the industry *Star Wars* (Lucas, 1977) took more than $46 million during its first week. This was achieved by coming up with a strong initial concept, marketing the film imaginatively and making a big play of releasing the film at the same time to more cinemas than was usual at the time. The film became the first to gross more than $400 million at the US box office and effectively changed marketing practices and release strategies for the industry.

Figure 6.2 *Star Wars*
Source: British Film Institute

The main thing to take on board is the fact that despite difficult times, in general Hollywood has been able to continually re-invent itself by seeing film as a commercial product that has to respond to a changing marketplace and take advantage of new opportunities offered by new technologies. At each moment in its history when the industry has faced the need to re-organize in the face of new competition the effort has always been to re-organize in as effective a way as possible in order to continue to make money.

ACTIVITY . . .

1 Research a few of the films mentioned in this chapter so far. Who were the main stars in each film? See what you can find out about the main star from each film. Who directed each film? Again, see what you can find out about these people.
2 Write a short 100–200 word biography on the star you find most interesting and another on the director you have found most interesting.

Change over time

As a student of film it is important to know a little about the history of Hollywood:

- to be aware of early 'silent' cinema and the change to 'talkies' around 1930;
- to be able to identify differences and similarities between the studio system of the 1930s and 1940s and contemporary Hollywood filmmaking;
- to understand something of how the studio system broke up in the 1950s before re-inventing itself during the 1970s with films like *Jaws* (Spielberg, 1975) and *Star Wars*.

To emphasize the point once more, the continuity link through all this time and the factor that it is most important to recognize from the outset is that film has always been seen by Hollywood as a commercial product to be made in as cost-effective a way as possible and to be sold for the greatest profit achievable.

Casablanca, Sin City and baked beans

So, when we enter our local DVD shop and take from the shelf the film marked *Casablanca* or the film marked *Collateral* or *Sin City* it is not in some senses any different from entering a supermarket and picking up a can of our favourite baked beans. We will look at the labelling, paying particular attention to the maker's name and noting what the pictures on the box suggest about the item we are considering purchasing. We will decide if this is the product we want, buy it, take it home, open the package and prepare ourselves to enjoy what the advertising and marketing has told us to expect. Films in their DVD and VHS formats are packaged using visual images and wording in as effective a way as possible to tell us exactly the sort of thing we are buying; or perhaps sometimes we might think in order to trick us into purchasing something that does not turn out to be half as good as the packaging suggested, or as the trailers and other adverts suggested.

ACTIVITY . . .

1. Look at your DVD collection when you get home and choose one or two with what you believe to be interesting, eye-catching packaging.
2. Analyse the ways in which the covers are 'working' to attract attention and convey messages about the product to potential purchasers.
   - What words or names are being used and why? How prominent are they and why? What colouring is used? What typeface is employed? Why?
   - How about the image, why has it been chosen? Break the image down into component parts, if possible: how does each work to create meaning for us?
3. If possible take the DVD cover about which you feel you have the most to say to a meeting with other students studying film with you. Explain your understanding of your chosen DVD cover to them and compare your ideas with the ideas they have about the covers they have brought for discussion.

Films and the cinema

But of course films do not just come as DVDs. Films are usually first seen as new releases screened in cinemas (although you can get made-for-TV films, and also films that go straight to video or DVD rather than having a theatrical release). Indeed the ultimate financial success of any film is usually determined by its level of success in the cinema. And here we are not just talking about final box-office takings for the year of release: it is usually true to say that by the end of the opening weekend analysts working for the studio concerned already have a pretty strong indicator as to the film's eventual level of financial success, or failure. Films shown in the cinema are sold to us via still images and wording in ways that are reminiscent of DVD covers through the use of posters. In addition to this, when we attend the cinema trailers work hard to attempt to persuade us to return in the future to see further films.

ACTIVITY . . .

1 Choose a film poster you have seen recently and examine the way in which it has been put together. Is it effective or not? In what ways is it effective? In what ways do you think it is not effective? How do layout, wording and images chosen attempt to make the poster effective?
2 Write 600 words explaining how you feel layout, wording and images work to attempt to sell this particular film.

ACTIVITY . . .

- What has been the most effective trailer you have seen recently at the cinema?
- What made it effective? Was it something to do with the voiceover? Or the visual images selected? Or the style of the filmmaking? Or the challenging nature of the ideas that seemed to be examined by the film?
- Do you think it would have been equally attractive to other cinemagoers, or is there a reason it was particularly interesting to you?

Films and TV

Films are also available for us to watch on TV of course and as such have been for around 50 years, but only comparatively recently has this space become so important for film sales. With the proliferation of channels brought about by the appearance of cable and satellite TV, a massive new 'window' for the exhibition of film has been opened up for the industry. Previously there were only a relatively few terrestrial channels.

ACTIVITY . . .

1 Research preview trailers on any pay-to-view channel. Analyse the ways in which these previews are 'working' to attract attention and convey messages about the product to potential purchasers.

   - What words or names are being used visually and why? How prominent are they and why? What colouring is used? What typeface is employed?
   - Do the previews use a voiceover? If so, how has the voiceover been constructed? What elements of the film are being emphasized in the voiceover script and why? Is there a particular tone of voice employed?
   - How about the images, why have they been chosen? Break the images down into component sections, if possible. How does each work to create meaning and generate responses from us?

2 If possible, take a recorded copy of the preview trailers you have looked at to a meeting with other people studying film with you. Explain your understanding of your chosen previews to them and compare your ideas with the ideas they have about the previews they have brought for discussion.

Economics and the film industry

For now, the main thing to take on board is that a commercial film is the product of an industrial production process involving the use of a variety of technologies and human labour. The inter-related roles of industrial relations, markets, business agendas and issues of profit and loss accounting, for example, are all therefore of relevance to an understanding of how we as an audience come to be presented with the films we are studying. Perhaps you were not expecting to have to deal with these sorts of areas in studying film but you have to appreciate this is a multi-million pound industry.

ACTIVITY . . .

1 Organize yourselves into groups and either nominate one photographer in each group or agree to take turns in this role.
2 Go to your nearest town or city and take shots of as many film-related images that you can see in the streets as possible.
3 Before you go out on location, list specific places you know in the town/city where you might find images related to film (cinemas, bookshops, shops selling DVDs, DVD rental outlets, billboards, etc.).
4 Create a montage of images to be displayed in the classroom or on your school/college website if possible with the aim of showing just how inescapable a part of everybody's life film has become in recent years.

(If you wish to take shots inside any premises, make sure you explain what you are doing and ask permission before pressing the shutter.)

FILMMAKING: THE PROCESS

There are then, as we have seen, a whole series of ways in which we as consumers of film come into quite immediate contact with the industry in our everyday life. What will most likely be outside our direct experience, though, will be the various stages involved in the making of commercial films.

There are three phases to the actual production, or making, of a film:

- preparation, or pre-production – the initial idea is developed and written as a script, and funds are obtained;
- shooting, or production – images and sounds are physically recorded and put on film (or digitally recorded);
- assembly, or post-production – the images and sounds are edited and put together in their final form.

Obviously each of these stages can be carried out on a very small scale, within a school or college for example, and if you have taken part in the process you will be aware of how well you have to be organized and how carefully you have to plan each of these stages. But if we are looking at the commercial film industry, beyond the actual making of the film, there will also be issues of distribution and marketing to be considered, because once it has been made, the film has to find an audience and be placed in an accessible form for that audience. It has to be decided where and when the film is going to be exhibited.

- In what countries is it to be shown?
- Should there be a single global release date?
- Should some countries receive the film before others?
- In which cinema chains is it to be shown in particular countries?
- Initially how many cinemas should it be released to in each country?
- How should this initial release be built upon in order to maximize the potential audience? How quickly is it to move on to DVD release?
- How long should it be before it is shown on satellite, cable and terrestrial TV?

In other words, what are the marketing and distribution strategies that should be followed for this particular product (bearing in mind that potentially each film might need to employ strategies individually tailored to the particular nature of the product)?

KEY TERM

MARKETING This refers to the total package of strategies used to try to promote and sell a film. Large distribution companies in charge of marketing will employ researchers to investigate the market for any particular film and enable them to keep abreast of shifting trends in consumer practices. They will also use focus groups (or members of the public) from the supposed target market to view and comment upon the film at various stages with the idea of altering the script if necessary. Such early showings of the film behind closed doors are known as test screenings.

All of this will occur before those elements more usually associated with marketing, the screening of cinema trailers, the launching of a press campaign and the instigation of a poster campaign, come into play. Although, of course, the planning for each of these strands involving the development of a clear timetable for each stage of the marketing process will be under way even as the film is being shot.

To some extent if you have a big budget blockbuster these decisions are easy; you swamp every other opposition product if you can through a saturation release that hits as many screens as possible from day one. But if you do not have a big budget then a carefully planned release strategy can make your film initially create good 'word of mouth' through a limited opening release pattern and then build on this as what the business calls 'want to see' is created. In fact, of course, even if you are producing a very low budget small-scale film you will still be thinking in terms of some audience or other. It may be you are only producing it for yourself and your friends to view, or perhaps as a home movie for your immediate family, or as a short to be put out on the college website, but still you will be aiming to engage the interest of your prospective audience. You will want to create something that means something for them and generates some sort of envisaged response from them. Ideally, what the producers of commercial films are looking for is a film with 'legs', that is one that is going to keep on running thereby making money at the box office over an extended period.

KEY TERM

RELEASE PATTERN This is the part of the marketing strategy that determines the number of prints of the film that are to be initially put out to cinemas, which cinemas are to receive the film to begin with, and then how that initial release of the film is to be expanded and built upon.

A film might be given a 'general release' right across the country or it might have a 'select release' to a few cinemas in a few cities where the audience is felt to be right for this particular film. A 'saturation release' would indicate that the effort has been to put the film out immediately to as many cinemas as possible.

A film is usually released first of all within its country of origin before moving out to other countries in a developmental fashion, although it is now possible for a big Hollywood film to have a single global release date.

Whatever pattern is adopted, the key thing to recognize is the way in which market analysts will have worked together to try to decide upon the strategy that will be best suited to maximizing box-office returns on their product.

So, a film (any film) can always be seen as going through:

- a production phase;
- a distribution phase;
- an exhibition phase.

Distribution

This involves making sure a release pattern is put into place that will enable the product to reach the widest and largest audience possible. Of course, film distributors may be small firms specializing in certain types of film or multinational corporations with global networks of offices, and the products they deal with and markets they focus upon will vary enormously. However, essentially, the distributor:

- acquires the rights to the film;
- decides the number of prints to be made and released to exhibitors;
- negotiates a release date for the prints;
- arranges delivery of prints to cinemas;
- provides trailers and publicity material for exhibitors;
- puts together a package of advertising and publicity to promote the film;
- negotiates related promotional and/or merchandising deals.

Marketing

This can be seen as three distinct areas: advertising, publicity, and promotional deals worked out with other companies. Within an overall marketing budget, possibilities within each of these areas will be considered in terms of the likely return on ticket sales weighed against cost. The big plus in favour of publicity is that it is essentially free, although there might be some associated costs such as expenses for one of the film's stars who is going to be interviewed on a TV show. Advertising, on the other hand, has to be paid for: so, if as a marketing executive for a particular film you succeed in getting a review on the film pages of a newspaper next to an advert for your film, the first of these things will be free whereas the second will have to be paid for.

Advertising

A range of media will be considered – newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, etc. – with a clear agenda to hit a specific target audience. The poster campaign is often the primary medium for advertising a film comprising the central image that will also feature heavily in the publicity campaign. Some films will have teaser posters before the release date, a main poster to coincide with the release date, and later a third poster with comments from critics. You will also have noticed how posters for any film often vary according to where they are 'placed'. For example a poster designed to catch your eye as you are walking, cycling or driving will be different from one in a magazine where you are expected to have more time to take in information.

KEY TERM

POSTER CAMPAIGN A marketing strategy involving the use of a prominently displayed series of posters to promote a film. Each poster will be carefully put together to present what is seen to be a desirable image to be associated with the film and will be strategically placed in the press and positioned on hoardings in such a way as to attempt to catch the eye of the film's target audience. The aim will be to present the public with a clearly defined notion of exactly what is special or particular about this film. This is sometimes referred to as the film's 'unique selling point', or USP.

ACTIVITY . . .

1 Find your own examples of posters for one film that have been designed for a range of placements.
2 How do they differ? How are they constructed to fit their likely audience? Explore layout, text and visual images in detail in relation to each other but most importantly in relation to the chosen outlet position.
3 Write a short essay (600 words) exploring the differences.

Publicity

Since they are essentially free, reviews, articles, interviews, photographs used in any of the media have a special importance for the success of a marketing campaign. Press kits are sent out comprising authorized stills, cast and crew credits, production notes, and biographies of cast/director/producer. There will be efforts to get key personnel especially stars involved with any new film on to as many TV and radio outlets as possible. Again, be aware of your own experience: you know only too well that when you start seeing a particular favourite star of yours on TV, on one programme after another, it always coincides with the release of their latest film (or the latest instalment of their autobiography). A trailer is also usually put out several weeks before the release in order to raise awareness of the product, as you will be aware from your own cinema visits.

KEY TERM

TRAILERS A short advert for a film put together by the distributors. It will usually be comprised of extracts from the film in question with an added voiceover designed to sell the film. A shorter version of the trailer sometime before the film is due out is known as a 'teaser'.

ACTIVITY . . .

1. Take a high profile Hollywood film of your choice that is about to be released, and by looking carefully through the *Radio Times* or any other magazines or Internet sites with programme schedules, try to see whether the marketing team have been successful in gaining time and space to promote their company's new product.
2. Draw up a list of programmes with dates and times that are reviewing the film, interviewing 'the talent' involved in the project, and/or showing extracts from the film.

KEY TERM

'THE TALENT' This is a film industry term for the main creative players involved in the production of any particular film. It is often used to refer to the director, the producer, the screenwriter and the lead actors as a group of key personnel, but may include others such as an art director, director of cinematography and musical director.

Promotions

Special concessionary deals might be offered to sectors of the public believed most likely to be interested in the film being promoted; competitions connected to the film might be set up in magazines or newspapers, or on food packaging likely to be picked up by the target audience; and merchandise related to the film in some way might be given away or offered at special rates. In each case the effort will be to raise awareness of the forthcoming film amongst potential consumers within the profiled target audience.

ACTIVITY . . .

1. Without researching the ways in which this film was actually marketed, choose a newly released film and decide what you would see as being the likely target audience for this film. Describe what you would see as the profile of this audience.
2. What concessionary deals might appeal to this audience in relation to this film?
3. What competitions might help to promote this film to this target audience?
4. How would you use merchandising to promote this film, again with your chosen target audience in mind?
5. Discuss your ideas with others, putting forward your ideas and explaining the reasoning behind each idea.

Exhibition

Cinema exhibition has always tended to be controlled by a relatively small number of companies. And often the major studios responsible for making films will have considerable stakes in some of these companies that are responsible for showing their products. If small independent exhibitors want to screen less well-known films, they need to know their local film-going market well, since they will be working without the back-up of the major marketing campaigns that accompany big studio productions.

But as was previously suggested, exhibition no longer refers simply to showing films in the cinema. We can now see films on terrestrial TV, satellite and cable TV (including specialist pay-to-view channels), on video or DVD using high quality home cinema set-ups, and now via the Internet and even mobile phones.

ACTIVITY . . .

1. Research the ways in which the Internet is now used in relation to film.
2. Find as many different sites as possible. These may be critical magazines, fan-based sites, industry-organized sites or educational sites.
3. Allocate one website per person to be explored in some depth.
4. Each person should prepare a short one-page A4 handout on their website for everyone else describing the main features and in particular setting out what its role and purpose within the film process might be said to be.

ACTIVITY . . .

1. How many films are to be shown on terrestrial TV next week? How many hours of terrestrial TV scheduling do these films take up? How much does the terrestrial TV licence cost?
2. How many specialist film channels are available on satellite and cable TV? How many hours per day are films shown on these channels? How much does it cost to subscribe to these channels?
3. How many pay-to-view channels are now available to subscribers? How many hours per day are films shown on these channels? How much does it cost to purchase each film on these channels?
   (You will obviously need to use either the *Radio Times* or some other magazine showing programme schedules to complete this exercise. And you might like to work in groups to complete the task more efficiently.)

FILM PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION AND EXHIBITION

Take any two films of your choice and try to trace their development through from their initial inception as embryonic ideas to their box-office success (or failure). Use the

Internet to help you with your research, but be pragmatic about your choice of films; look to see how much information seems to be available before you make your final choice. The only limitation on your choice is that one film must be from Hollywood and the other must be British. For each film you might try to answer the following questions but do not treat these as anything more than guidelines. You will not be able to find the answer to each of these questions and you might well have ideas of your own for additional relevant information to include under each phase of the industrial/commercial process.

1 What happened during pre-production?

- Whose idea was the film? Did the idea start with the writer, or were writers brought in to develop a preconceived idea?
- Where did the idea come from? Was it an original idea, or was it perhaps a book first, or TV series, or comic strip, or from some other source?
- Who wrote the original script? Did other people become involved in the writing as the project progressed?
- How easy was it to arrange the financial backing to make the film? Who were the financial backers?
- How well known was the production company? What was its track record?
- Who was the producer? How did he or she become involved?
- Who was the director? How did he or she become involved?

2 What happened during the production phase?

- Was it an easy 'shoot'? If there were difficulties what were they? Were there tensions between any of the key creative personnel, often known as 'the talent'?
- Was any part of the film shot on location? If so, where?
- Was any part shot in a studio? If so, which studio, where?
- Were there any difficulties with casting, or with acquiring the stars/actors the producer wanted?
- Was it shot within budget? Was it ever in danger of going over budget? What was that budget? Can you find a breakdown for the budget?
- Were there any changes to the script during production? How many changes or re-writes? Did the same scriptwriter(s) stay 'on board' all the time, or were some replaced?
- List as many people as possible making contributions to the production.
- If possible highlight some of their individual contributions.

3 What happened during the distribution phase?

- Who were the distributors? How well known was the company? What was their track record as distributors?
- How did the filmmakers decide where to release the film and when? What was the eventual release pattern?
- What deals were made for distribution abroad? How easily were these deals secured?
- Did they at any stage change their plans for the release pattern, and if so why?

- What was the marketing and advertising strategy for the film? Was there a première, and if so where?
- What outlets were used for advertising? Was TV used, for example?
- Were there any merchandising tie-ins?
- Was any additional publicity gained, and if so, how?

4 What happened during the exhibition phase?

- When was the film first released; also where and on how many screens?
- Was there a particular strategy attached to increasing the number of prints available?
- Were there any difficulties with the censors? How did the censors classify the film?
- Were there any other special restrictions placed on the exhibition of the film?
- What was the reaction of the critics to the film? Was it considered a critical success? Has it been re-assessed since then?
- Did the film create any particular media debate, or create news headlines?
- How much money did the film take in its first year? Was it considered a commercial/financial success?
- Did it have 'legs', that is did it continue to run in the cinema for some time?

To make the point once more, there may well be questions here to which you cannot find the answer for your chosen film and there may be important points you would like to include that are not covered in the questions as set out. Remember all of this is only here to offer guidelines and possibilities; it is for you to work on tracing the development of your own chosen product from concept to the screen.

OVERVIEW

The production of film followed by the distribution of film and then the exhibition of film is then the general process, but of course there have been and continue to be changes over the years since cinema began at the end of the nineteenth century and there have been and continue to be differences between the systems adopted from one country to another. Hollywood's greatest period of fame and cultural importance was arguably during the 1930s and 1940s in that period we have called the studio system but has also been known as 'the Golden Age of Hollywood' or 'Classical Hollywood' and is now sometimes known simply as 'Old Hollywood'. But even in this one American site of industrial-style film development there were differences before and after this period and even changes during this period (including differences in approach from one studio to another). In all likelihood you will have noticed during your research considerable differences between the processes bringing your two chosen films to the screen. These differences may have been a product of the different strategies of different studios, the different cultural backgrounds of Hollywood and Britain, and perhaps most obviously as a result of differences in budget.

EXAMPLE EXAM QUESTIONS

1. To what extent are Hollywood films simply 'products' made to make a profit?
2. How important is marketing in influencing people to watch Hollywood films both at the cinema and on DVD?
3. How are posters and poster-style advertisements in newspapers and magazines used to create audiences for films?

CONCLUSION

In order to study film it is important:

- to maintain a thoughtful and perceptive awareness of the fact that films exist as part of a film industry;
- to realize that there is a complex commercial process to be gone through before a film reaches the screen;
- to see films on one level at least as being sold to consumers and knowingly bought by those consumers as commercial products.

FURTHER READING

Abrams, N., Bell, I. and Udris, J. (2001) *Studying Film*, London: Arnold (Chapter 2).

Corrigan, T. and White, P. (2004) *The Film Experience: An Introduction*, Boston: Bedford/St Martin's (Chapter 1).

Gomery D. (1988) 'Hollywood as industry' in Hill, J. and P. Church Gibson (eds) *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

Kawin, B.F. (1992) *How Movies Work*, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press (Part 3).

Kochberg, S. (2003) 'Cinema as institution' in Nelmes, J. (ed.) *An Introduction to Film Studies*, London: Routledge.

Lacey, N. (2005) *Introduction to Film*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan (Chapter 3).

Miller, F. (1994) *MGM Posters: The Golden Years*, Atlanta: Turner Publishing.

Nourmand, T. and Marsh, G. (eds) (2005) *Film Posters of the 90s: The Essential Movies of the Decade*, London: Aurum Press.

(There is a range of poster books that are fairly easily available and are similar to the two above.)

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.hollywoodreporter.com

www.filmfestivals.com

www.variety.com

7 AUDIENCES AS FANS AND CONSUMERS

This chapter will deal with:

- ways in which audiences can be seen to have a role within the filmmaking process as both fans and consumers of films;
- ways in which audiences as both fans and consumers can put pressure on the film industry to produce the products they want to see;
- ways in which the film industry is able to exert pressure to try to create fans and encourage consumption.

NOTEBOX . . .

This chapter will be particularly relevant to FS2 – Producers and Audiences: Hollywood and British Cinema for the WJEC AS level in Film Studies. Obviously this will involve exploration of the roles of both groups mentioned here, producers and audiences, and if you have read and worked on the previous chapter you will already have started to do this. When we consider the role of the producers, or makers of films, it may turn out to be more complex than we anticipate but it does at least seem relatively clear-cut initially in a way that is not perhaps the case when we come to consider the role of audiences. (Considered in conjunction with work on 'Fandom' in the companion to this book, A2 *Film Studies: The Essential Introduction*, this will also be relevant to the final exam at the end of the full A Level, FS6 – Critical Studies.)

THE EARLY CINEMA EXPERIENCE

As the initially perhaps rather strange nature of film came to be accepted during the early 1900s, so too the practice of going to watch films as a form of entertainment came to be accepted socially and thought of as a normal, everyday experience. But, it is as

well to recognize early on in your studies of the film industry that the experience of going to the cinema is, in fact, a socially engineered practice that is to be found only in societies where the culture has embraced not only film technology but also the idea of film as a commercial proposition. In order to make money from films, the early exhibitors of film had to attract the public to a venue where they could be charged for watching the products on offer. In doing so they were beginning to engineer a situation in which the public could be encouraged to become consumers of film products on a regular basis.

The commercial development of the idea of cinema

Early cinemas were primitive affairs – perhaps a former shop that had been cleared and filled with chairs or a fairground tent erected in one town after another. But by as early as the 1910s and 1920s in some places in America, the concept had been developed to the stage where cinemas were such grand places that they were known as 'picture palaces'. These venues to all intents and purposes were like 'palaces' with rich curtains, thick carpets, intricate plasterwork, magnificent entrance halls, expensive chandelier lighting, sweeping flights of stairs and uniformed ushers whose job was to treat patrons with the respect due to their betters. It is often said that multiplex cinemas were such an important innovation for the film industry in Britain in the mid-1980s because they recognized the need to give the public not only a choice of films but also an appealing social experience. Yet the importance of the 'total experience', the recognition that what was being sold was not just the film itself, was appreciated just as strongly by the exhibitors who invested money in building the 'picture palaces' in the early years of cinema. They were part of a large group of entrepreneurial businessmen in the United States who recognized early on the commercial possibilities for film.

The popularity of the cinema experience

Of course, the presence of a large domestic market looking for cheap entertainment helped to make the possibilities clear to the business community. In particular, it has been suggested that with large immigrant communities in the United States lacking a good command of English, silent cinema was an especially appropriate form of entertainment that was always likely to become instantly popular. By 1930, Americans were making 80 million visits a week to cinemas across the country – a figure that equated to 65 per cent of the population going once a week. This percentage dropped off a little during the economic depression of the 1930s but still held steady at around 60 per cent.

In terms of sheer numbers, the cinema was at the height of its popularity immediately after the Second World War, with 90 million visits a week being made to cinemas in America and more than 30 million a week in Britain. Today, despite increases in attendance over the past ten to 15 years, those figures are down to 27 million a week in the US and just over 3 million a week in Britain.

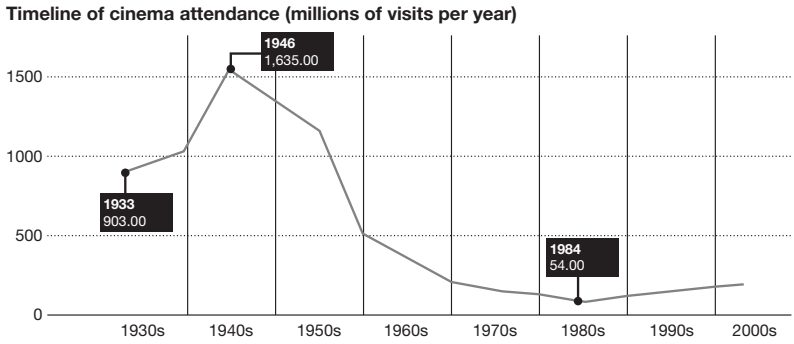


Figure 7.1 *Timeline of cinema attendance*
Source: www.bbc.co.uk

ACTIVITY . . .

1 Try to find older members of your family or family friends who are willing to be interviewed about their cinema-going experiences. Draw up a series of questions before you sit down to interview them, but do not feel restricted to these areas if you find the discussion developing in unexpected but interesting directions. Think carefully about ways that might ensure you obtain a useful interview: can you find a time and place where both you and the person you are interviewing will feel comfortable and relaxed, for example. Interviewing parents and grandparents (or people of equivalent ages) would be particularly useful because setting their views alongside your own would give you some insight into the experience of three generations.

2 Obvious questions would include:

- where and when they first went to the cinema;
- how regularly they went to the cinema when they were in their teens and early 20s;
- which films they particularly remember seeing and why;
- how popular cinema-going seemed to be amongst their friends during this period;
- why they think people went to the cinema at that time;
- what cinemas were like then and how they would compare to today's cinemas.

3 Try to put the ideas and perspectives you obtain from the interviews into the form of a comparative table showing how the different people you interviewed have responded to the same sort of questions.

4 Discuss the responses you have obtained with other people who have undertaken the same exercise. Bring your final table of responses with you in order to help you to look for similarities and differences between the results of your interviews and those conducted by other people.

The nature of the cinema experience

And yet, at the same time, in a way how strange is the idea of going to the cinema? We choose to venture into a dimly lit, soon-to-be-darkened auditorium with a group of strangers and sit before a large screen in order to share with these people we have never met a lightshow display of 'magically' created images of the real world or maybe of distinctly unreal imaginary worlds.

On the other hand, maybe this is not so strange; the gathering together of communities to listen to specialist members of the group given the job of telling stories has always, it would seem, been a feature of human society. In the years prior to film projection, magic lantern shows (which involved storytelling and the projection of images on to a screen) would be taken from town to town. And audiences were used to gathering to watch live performances on stage in these years whether it was 'high brow' plays in up-market theatres or 'low brow' vaudeville acts (comedians, singers, dancers, acrobats and the like) in music halls.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Why should communities always have gathered together in this way? What do the individuals concerned gain from the experience? What does the society or community gain from allowing the activity to take place?
- Why have storytelling and performance always seemed to be important during such gatherings? What do audiences gain from listening to stories and from watching performance?
- Discuss your answers to these questions with others, if possible.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Think about your own cinema-going patterns. Do you ever go on your own? Do you tend to go with the same people to the same sorts of films? How does the experience differ depending on whether you are on your own or with particular friends? How do you decide what you are going to go to see and who you are going to go with? Do you simply go to watch the film at a set time or do you combine this with some other activity (or activities) such as shopping or eating out?

- When did you first go to the cinema? What did you go to see? Who took you? What can you remember about the experience (not just the film but the event of going to the cinema as a whole)?
- Note your own ideas in response to these questions before discussing and comparing your responses with others.

ACTIVITY . . .

- What do the terms 'high brow' and 'low brow' mean? Would you say that in your experience going to the cinema is a 'high brow' or 'low brow' pastime? What we are really saying is, what type or class of people do you believe go to the cinema? Does this vary depending on the film, and/or depending on the particular cinema in question?
- Note your own ideas in response to these questions before discussing and comparing your responses with others.

CHANGING PATTERNS OF CONSUMPTION

All of the above, of course, neglects to take account of one factor of which you will be well aware from your own experience: films are no longer solely or even mainly consumed in the cinema. Young people in particular increasingly watch films on small screens using various models of DVD player.

This trend towards home consumption really began in the 1960s when studios began to realize they could use television to show films long after they had passed their sell-by-date for cinema exhibition. By the following decade home video systems began to be cheap enough and lightweight enough to be marketable on a commercial scale and rental outlets began to supply feature films to this expanding market. By the late 1980s satellite technology was beginning to be used to broadcast to domestic receivers, and specialist film channels began to offer feature films some time in advance of their video release. What we are now witnessing in the High Street is the rapid disappearance of videos as they are pushed from the shelves by a deluge of DVDs. These are easier and cheaper for distribution companies to produce than videos and therefore provide good profit margins, but they are also easier and cheaper for the public to copy. Hence, there are growing concerns in the industry about the illegal copying of DVDs.

ACTIVITY . . .

1 Undertake a survey amongst 20–30 young people to try to find out how they watch films. Questions you might like to ask could include:

- how often they go to the cinema;
- how often they watch films on terrestrial TV;
- how often they watch films on satellite or cable channels;
- how often this is a pay-to-view channel;
- how often they watch films on DVDs;
- where they do this and on what types of DVD player.

2 If possible, display the resulting information in the form of a graph, one which will help anyone coming to the material for the first time. (In the exam covering this part of the course you might have to interpret information set out in graphs and/or tables, and you are certainly likely to come across information laid out in this form in textbooks or articles relating to film consumption.)

THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE IN THE FILMMAKING PROCESS

So, in general terms what exactly is the role of film audiences within the film industry? At its simplest, the role of producers is obviously to create product, in this case films, and following this line of thought the role of the audience is to turn up and watch the films; but more importantly from an industry perspective the audience has to be prepared to pay money for the product on offer. In order for this to happen the audience clearly has to see the product as being worth the price being asked. If they are unsure of this and marketing is unable to convince them, then the whole business of filmmaking on a commercial scale is no longer viable.

The power of the audience within the film concept-to-screen process becomes clearer if we bear in mind from the start that the industry could churn out as many films as they wished but unless the punters materialize in the cinema the products on offer will never come to represent a commercial proposition. Hollywood spends millions of dollars trying to persuade audiences to queue up at the box office and no multinational corporation is going to do that unless it feels the returns are likely to make that marketing outlay a sound investment. Clearly audiences coming to a film in their droves or staying away in equal numbers can either make or break a film as a commercial proposition.

ACTIVITY . . .

1 Draw a diagram to show the relationship between audiences and the film industry. It can take any form you choose but you should aim to include as many factors as possible that contribute to the relationship. You might choose to put the film as product at the centre of the diagram and then try

continued

to show how producers and audiences relate to this central focus as well as to each other. Above all you should be looking to show how the producers can work to attempt to influence audiences to buy their product (see the previous chapter) and how audiences can exert pressure on producers to come up with the sorts of products they wish to see available. (Amongst your ideas here you might like to consider how the Internet has altered the possibilities for audiences.)

2 If possible, show your diagram to other people and in turn consider their efforts to complete the same task. Note similarities and differences in the diagrammatic forms chosen but above all look for points of agreement and disagreement over the strategies employed by both groups. (Using diagrams is often a good way to think your way through (or think your way towards understanding) these sorts of complex relationships. Incidentally, they can also be useful as a revision tool since diagrammatic/pictorial representations can often be more easily recalled than simple lists of ideas.)

The pleasures of cinema

There is also a very real sense in which those of us studying film need to enjoy the experience of the cinema ourselves, or we will never be able to understand its power and position in our culture. The primary effect of a film on an audience has to be recognized as being that it 'pleasures' the members of that audience in some way so that they are enticed to spend time watching it (and the primary prerequisite for being a Film Studies student is that we find that films give us pleasure). However, there is also a very real sense in which if we are unable to detach ourselves and analyse what is happening to ourselves and others as we watch, that is how particular effects are being made on the audience, then we are in danger of being controlled (and perhaps even manipulated in dangerous ways) by what is undeniably a pleasurable experience.

KEY TERM

VIEWING PLEASURE There is the simple human pleasure of looking, or scopophilia (seen by Freud as one of the infantile sexual drives) and voyeurism, the act of watching others without their knowledge, both of which have been explored in film theory in relation to the act of watching films in a darkened room. But there are also pleasures derived from aspects of the film viewing experience such as being able to solve mysteries, to follow a causal chain of events, to identify with strong characters, to recognize narrative patterns or genre features seen before, to be surprised or even shocked by images or portrayed events, to be able to experience fear in safety and so on.

ACTIVITY . . .

1. In groups undertake a survey of up to 20 people trying to find out what it is they find pleasurable about films. First of all you need to compile a list of questions for the survey. The first might most usefully be: do you find films pleasurable? From here you can then ask a further series of questions to attempt to pinpoint what it is that is found to be pleasurable. You will need to decide (and agree) on these questions as a group. It might be useful to have a final more open question that allows the respondent to put forward any of their own ideas for what is pleasurable in films that have not been covered in your questionnaire.
2. When you have completed the survey analyse your results and present your findings briefly to the rest of the class accompanied by an A4 sheet summarizing your key points.
3. As a class try to compile an agreed rank order list showing those aspects of film that are found to be the most pleasurable.

ACTIVITY . . .

1. Why do you watch the type of films you do? Is it that you like particular genres or types of storytelling? Is it that you follow the work of a particular star or director? Do you choose to watch different films at different times for different reasons, sometimes wanting material that is going to make you think and at other times wanting relaxing entertainment for example?
2. Do you ever watch anything other than fictional narrative film? Why do you think more documentaries seem to have been made for the cinema in recent years than used to be the case?
3. If you have seen the film, what did you think of the use of animation in *Kill Bill, Part 1* (Tarantino, 2003)? Did you enjoy it? Was it successful, in your view? What other films have you seen that use animation in a similar way?
4. While you are thinking about Tarantino, if you have seen it what did you make of *From Dusk Till Dawn* (Rodriguez, 1995) in which he played the role of the psychotic desperado Richard Gecko? In particular how did you react at the moment of this film's transformation into a vampire movie? List any other films you have seen that use different genres or combine genres in this way or in similar ways.
5. Discuss the ideas you have come up with on these points with others if possible, taking especially careful note of where their ideas might differ from yours.

Box-office takings and breaking even

When evaluating the relationship between audiences and the industry it does have to be said that in the long run there are so many money-spinning possibilities attached to a big budget Hollywood product along with such levels of marketing expertise and funding that even a box office flop, say *Waterworld* (Costner, 1995), is likely to eventually turn in a profit however slender. There will be box-office takings from around the world; distribution rights can be sold in countries around the world; satellite, cable and terrestrial TV channels around the world will all pay to show the film at some stage; and the DVD will go on selling and being re-packaged and re-sold at appropriate moments. So, *Waterworld* that cost a reported $175 million to make took only $88 million at the US box office and was heralded as an expensive flop and yet managed to make a further $166 million abroad. Box office takings are clearly important and the relative success or failure of a big budget Hollywood film in terms of profits will become clear over the first weekend of a film's release. But there are a series of further commercial possibilities beyond immediate box-office takings that attach to any major film and enable studios to recoup their outlay.

ACTIVITY . . .

1. Research the takings made by any recent film that has been considered to be a relative box-office flop. Try to find out the costs of production and marketing and then weigh these against money taken. Draw up a list of possible further revenue sources that are either still in the future for this film or about which you have been unable to find any data.
2. Present your information in brief (no more than half a side of A4 paper). Exchange copies of your findings with other people if possible.

Facts in focus

- *Shrek 2* was the biggest film of the year, earning over £48 million.
- Three UK films made it into the top ten – *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban, Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* and *Troy*.
- The USA was involved in every production in the top 20 films at the UK box office, partnering the UK on three films.
- The top 20 UK films grossed £176.3 million at the UK box office, over 20% of the total, a 45% increase on the last year's figure.

Figure 7.2 *Facts in focus*
Source: Chapter 2 of the UK Film Council Statistical Yearbook, 2004. Reproduced with permission of the UK Film Council

Films as entertainment for audiences

Of course, unless the creative personnel involved in making a film ('the talent' as they are referred to within the industry) are prepared to simply make the films they like for their own satisfaction and with no view to showing their efforts they must always have some sense of audience in mind during the production process. If the director, the actors, the cinematographer and others want people to see their efforts, they must create something that is in some way a commercial product; the bottom line is that it has to sell. Their perspective may be somewhat different from the pure business perspective on audiences found amongst studio executives which is solely focused upon whether people can be persuaded to pay money to watch a particular film, but it at least has to take account of this perspective.

As a form of entertainment competing with all the other forms of entertainment on offer, film must inevitably pay attention to its intended audience. The whole notion of entertainment implies an awareness of an audience that is to be entertained. The film industry does all it can to provide audiences with the stories they like framed within the genres they like. The producers of film make every effort to provide audiences with intrigue, spectacle, tension, suspense, surprise, shock, gratification and pleasure. Test screenings before an invited audience from the general public can even result in scenes being re-shot or endings to films being changed. Cinema chains invest huge sums in providing high quality exhibition facilities for audiences in order to accommodate further the desires of the audience. As a business, film must take careful account of the paying public since these are the people who will either agree to consume the product on offer or not. All of this, of course, suggests once again that audiences are powerful players within the filmmaking process.

ACTIVITY . . .

1 Find the official websites of any two major Hollywood studios and analyse and compare the layout of the sites. You should aim to explain how you see each element of the two sites as operating in relation to potential audiences. How do the visual images chosen, the written words and the sounds used work to grab the attention of the visitor to the site and perhaps attempt to turn her into a consumer?
2 Write 600 words comparing and contrasting the two sites. Explain ways in which they use similar techniques and any ways in which the two sites seem to take different approaches.

Films as dangerous influences on audiences

An alternative view of audiences has often seen them as weak-willed, and easily manipulated or even corrupted by films. All types of mass media from dangerous new musical forms to children's television have been seen as having the power to bring about anti-social behaviour, especially amongst the working class and the young. As

a result it has always been deemed necessary to try to control the content of films (and the media in general) in order to control the potential audience response.

As early as 1922 an industry-based organization, the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (re-named the Motion Picture Association of America in 1945), was set up by the Hollywood studios in effect to agree a level of self-censorship that would obviate the need for any government interference. Most famously under Will Hays during the 1930s, when it became known as the Hays Office and adopted the Hays Code, this organization imposed strict censorship particularly over sexual morality. The code stipulated the maximum length of on-screen kisses, for example, and limited bed-scene possibilities by saying at least one partner had to have at least one foot on the floor at all times.

Moral campaigners (at the time of the Hays Code it was the Catholic Legion of Decency) have repeatedly seen the media as being run by those who wish to challenge traditional morality. Some theorists have used psychological explanations to suggest there is a direct cause and effect relationship between violence on film (or in the media generally) and acts of violence in society; watching too much violence makes people violent goes this line of argument.

ACTIVITY . . .

1. Find a film from the past (pre-2000) that has been opposed by groups and/or individuals on the basis that it was likely to have some adverse effect on society (and perhaps in particular the young). For example, if you were interested in the early 1970s, films you could use would include A *Clockwork Orange* (Kubrick, 1971), *Straw Dogs* (Peckinpah, 1971) and *The Exorcist* (Friedkin, 1973). However, you have the whole history of film from which to choose, so try not to feel limited to a particular period: one of the recurring features of films is the way in which they constantly address taboo subjects (perhaps indeed this is some part of the role of storytelling within any society during any historical period).
2. Research your chosen film and if possible make a short (3–5 minute) presentation to others showing your findings. Try to use handouts and visual aids to show your audience exactly what was being said about this film at the time of its release. You might like to undertake this exercise in pairs or small groups.

Moral panics

At frequent intervals every society seems to become worried that some group within the community (often it seems, the young) is being corrupted in some way by some arm of the media. At this stage what have become known as moral panics break out, ironically within the media itself, as those who in some way see themselves as guardians of traditional values feel that social attitudes they believe in are under threat.

Stories proliferate in newspapers and magazines, and on TV and radio, about the latest trend that is offering a threat to society. There was, for example, a panic in the 1980s in Britain around films released on to VHS that came to be known as 'video nasties'. Often these moral panics have focused on the idea of the supposed way in which vulnerable sectors of the public are being either de-sensitized to violence or are losing sexual inhibitions that have long been in place.

ACTIVITY . . .

1. Conduct your own research using newspaper websites to see if you can find any articles on films currently causing controversy (or alternatively films from the recent past that have been viewed as in some way dangerous in their potential effects on audiences).
2. Download an article that deals with one such film at some length and analyse the argument being used. What is the attitude of the article towards the film in question? What are the main points put forward in the article? What evidence is used to support key ideas? Are any 'experts' quoted and if so what is their perspective on the relationship between films and audiences?
3. Do you personally find the line taken by the author to be convincing? Try to outline your main reasons for finding it either convincing or unconvincing.

CENSORSHIP AND CLASSIFICATION

The British Board of Film Classification is a non-governmental body funded by the industry through fees charged to those submitting films, videos and DVDs for classification. The main role of the BBFC, which used to be known as the British Board of Film Censors, is to classify films into a range of categories in order to prevent young people seeing material not thought to be suitable for them. The following categories are used:

U – 'Universal': films suitable for everyone.
PG – 'Parental Guidance': films anyone can see but with a warning that they might contain material thought unsuitable for children.
12A: films containing material suitable for those who are 12 years old or over but only for children under this age who are accompanied by a responsible adult.
15: films containing material suitable only for those who are 15 years old or over.
18: films containing material suitable only for those who are 18 years old or over.

There are a few other categories used alongside the ones above for videos:

Uc – video releases thought particularly suitable for pre-school children.
12 – releases containing material suitable only for those who are 12 years old or over.
R18 – releases that can only be sold in licensed sex shops (or shown in specially licensed cinemas).

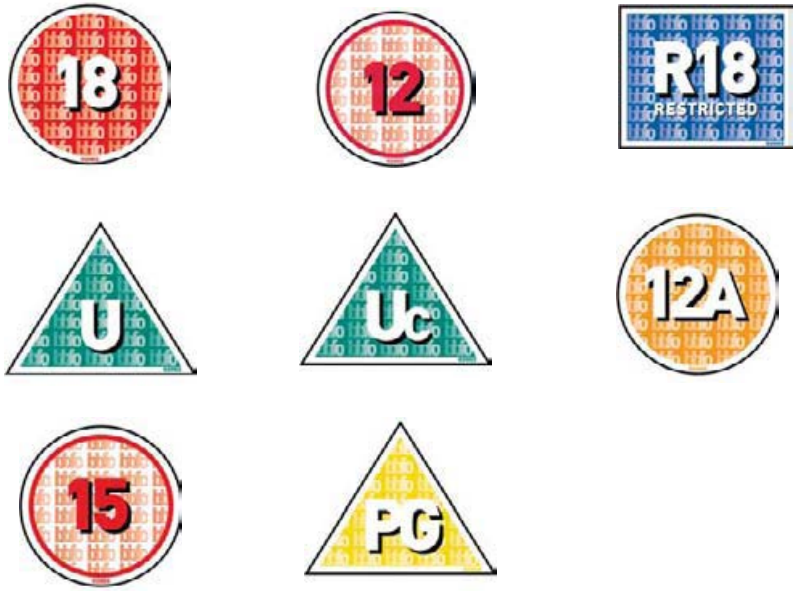


Figure 7.3 *The British Board of Film Classification logos. Trademark and copyright protected*
Source: BBFC. Reproduced with permission

ACTIVITY . . .

1. Do you think this is a useful classification system? Do you agree with the categories or are there any you think should be changed? In your experience is it effective?
2. Why do we have a classification system? Does it help audiences, and if so in what way? Could it be said to help those involved in making, distributing and exhibiting films, and if so in what way? Does it help those who are selling videos and DVDs?
3. What system of classification is used in the United States? List the categories used there. In what ways is this different from and in what ways similar to the British system?
4. Try to find out what other categories have been used in the past in Britain (and obviously what they meant). Why has the way in which films are classified changed over the years? How many factors can you think of that might contribute to this?

FAN POWER

It is often said that the critical factor for any film is whether or not it manages to obtain good 'word-of-mouth'; essentially whether or not those people who initially go to see the film come out singing its praises and telling their friends to go. But, of course, in addition to good 'word-of-mouth' a film can also receive bad 'word-of-mouth' and probably even worse is indifferent 'word-of-mouth'; at least bad 'word-of-mouth' means the film has roused some sort of impassioned response. What is interesting about 'word-of-mouth' is the increasing speed and intensity with which it can now be delivered by fans. Websites, e-mail, mobile phones and text messaging now mean that verdicts on any new release can be communicated instantly and with increased potency.

Furthermore with new technologies at their disposal fans are much more able to interact and maintain an ongoing fan base for particular types of film product whether that is with a genre, director, or star focus or taking some other perspective as a starting point. Fan clubs and conventions have traditionally been maintained via newsletters and paper-based fanzines, but now e-mail newsletters and website fanzines magnify and intensify the possibilities. Fans have always been able to create slow-burning cult classics out of films that have initially flopped at the box office but perhaps there is now greater opportunity for this sort of activity.

ACTIVITY . . .

Use an Internet search to locate two or three fanzine-style websites dedicated to different films, stars or directors. Analyse the language used, the attitude of contributors and the nature of the sites themselves. In particular look to see if there are any recognizable common features to be found in each of your examples.

INDUSTRY POWER

But if fan power is potentially on the increase as a result of new technologies, then as a result of these same new technologies and a movement towards business globalization the power of the film industry to exert control over the public is also growing. As a result of mergers and takeovers media companies are increasingly coming together in single stables or conglomerates of media interests.

Through working under the same umbrella organization these media companies are able to support each other in a reinforcing symbiotic exchange. A single multinational could have subsidiary companies:

- making, financing and distributing films;
- reviewing films in newspapers, or on TV/radio stations;
- publishing film scripts and distributing film soundtracks;
- screening films via cinema chains or satellite TV.

With this sort of interconnected involvement in the film industry the power of such a global enterprise becomes clear.

Media ownership, it seems, is quite simply becoming increasingly concentrated in a handful of laterally and vertically integrated multimedia conglomerates. And these companies are powerful; you only have to look at the engaging quality of their official websites to see just how they might be able to use their resources to influence the film-going/DVD-buying public.

- In 1989 Time Incorporated purchased Warner Communications to form Time Warner. In 1996 Time Warner merged with Turner Broadcasting forming the world's largest media conglomerate. In 2000 Time Warner merged with America On-Line to form the $350 billion corporation AOL-Time-Warner. This company has interests in cable television, film and television production and distribution, book and magazine publishing, the music industry, and now the Internet. All this is in addition to owning Warner Brothers film studio, New Line Cinema and being one of the largest cinema owners in the world.
- Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation combines film and television production with distribution at Twentieth Century Fox, has invested in lower budget filmmaking at Fox Searchlight and runs Fox network television. It also has worldwide cable and satellite television interests including ownership of BSkyB in Britain and Star TV in the potentially huge Asian market. In addition this conglomerate has book publishing interests and controls a portfolio of newspapers that includes the *Sun* and *The Times* in Britain.
- In 1993 Viacom bought Paramount. This conglomerate is now involved in both film and television production and distribution, owns cable channels like MTV, VH1 and Nickelodeon, controls television stations, has interests in book publishing and runs the Blockbuster video rental chain. In association with another company, Vivendi, they own a chain of cinemas worldwide.

ACTIVITY . . .

1. Use an Internet search engine to find the websites of AOL-Time-Warner, News Corporation, Viacom and/or other big players such as Disney or Sony.
2. Find out as much as you can about the media interests of these organizations paying particular attention to areas that you feel could be related to film (noticing how it has already been suggested above that in fact many areas could be relevant in some way or other).
3. Compile diagrams in your own chosen style to show the inter-related business interests of each of these multinational conglomerates in as much detail as possible.

GLOBALIZATION

These multimedia multinationals would be prime examples of the much discussed move towards 'global capitalism', or globalization. Each of them is able to utilize resources from around the world, most importantly perhaps cheap labour, during the making of media products. So, for instance, you might find that Hollywood films are being made on location in places where union regulations protecting wage levels are not as tight as in some Western countries.

Having made best use of global resources to keep down costs, these multinationals are then able to access global markets when selling the resulting products. So, there is a demand for Hollywood films right around the world that maximizes profit on a global scale rather than simply within North America. The commercial extent and financial power of these corporations enables them to contribute towards setting the agenda for the worldwide development of capitalism. So, if trade discussions are under way between countries, governments will be lobbied by these huge companies to try to make sure the resulting trade deals are advantageous to their future development.

One way of understanding what is happening here would be to suggest that it is the emergence of a whole series of new technologies (satellite TV, the Internet, mobile phones, etc.) that has led to this increasing media globalization and the formation of what has been dubbed 'the global village'. This concept of a 'global village' amounts to the suggestion that as a result of new technologies the world has effectively shrunk to the size of a village; the vast distance between places has in effect disappeared since it now only takes an instant to flash an e-mail from one side of the globe to the other.

KEY TERM

GLOBALIZATION A perceived economic trend towards the whole world becoming a single market so that major multinational corporations are increasingly able to control trade on a global scale.

ACTIVITY . . .

1 If possible, discuss the ideas of 'global capitalism' and 'the global village' with a group of other people.
2 Before you begin the discussion jot down your own thoughts on these ideas and try to work out your own personal perspective on each. Do you for example believe that there is definitely a trend towards 'global capitalism' or 'globalization' taking place in the world? Do you think the concept of the 'global village' is a useful way of looking at one aspect of the change that is taking place?

'Windows' and 'synergy'

Two key terms now for this area of Film Studies are 'windows' and 'synergy'. A film can now be viewed not only in the cinema but in a variety of ways, that is, via a series of 'windows'. We can attend the traditional cinema or a multiplex to watch a film; we can rent it on DVD (or maybe video); we can buy it as a DVD (or video); we can view it at home via satellite or cable pay-to-view channels or dedicated film channels, or if we miss these opportunities we can catch it a little later on terrestrial TV. Furthermore, each of these 'windows' needs increasingly to be seen within the context of the global market discussed above rather than simply the domestic market.

KEY TERM

WINDOWS A term used to suggest the variety of places that films can now be viewed.

KEY TERM

SYNERGY The multiplied business energy that is created by multinational multimedia ownership. By owning newspapers, magazines, book publishing and music companies, TV and radio stations, satellite/cable TV companies, alongside their involvement in cinema production, distribution and exhibition these massive corporations might be able to:

- publicize and advertise their films via their own print, sound and visual media arms;
- put out associated books and music, again from within their own organization;
- show their films via their own various TV and cinema outlets.

Increasingly, media corporations are now in effect able to give publicity to, advertise and promote films made by their film production arm via their own newspapers, magazines, radio stations, TV stations, satellite or cable channels, or over the Internet. Increasingly, important financial spin-offs from films are contained 'in-house' as it were: film-related books can be published by a company that is part of the media corporation's stable of companies; TV or satellite rights can be sold to a company within the same group; soundtrack CDs can be put out by another company within the group. In these sorts of ways the business energy of any single company is magnified, even multiplied. Thus 'synergy' is created.

Less than 20 per cent of total film revenue now comes from the domestic box office. So, although a good first weekend is crucial in giving a film that vital initial impetus, there is now a whole array of ways of subsequently recouping the financial outlay involved in making films.

ACTIVITY . . .

How do you view the consumer of films? Is he or she using this form of entertainment for escapism, or companionship, or entertainment? Is he or she the victim of advertising and marketing when making choices of what to see, or is he or she perfectly able to make his or her own choices?

EXAMPLE EXAM QUESTIONS

1 What role does the Internet now play in enabling people to develop their interest in films?

2 In what ways do factors such as who we watch films with and where we watch them influence our viewing experience and our response to film material?

3 How has the experience of watching films changed in recent years and how do you think it might develop in the future?

CONCLUSION

In order to study film it is important:

- to maintain a thoughtful and perceptive awareness of the fact that the film industry attempts to put the public under considerable pressure to buy their products;
- to realize that as fans and consumers the public may be able in turn to exert considerable influence over the film industry.

FURTHER READING

Abrams, N., Bell, I. and Udris, J. (2001) *Studying Film*, London: Arnold (Chapter 3).

Corrigan, T. and White, P. (2004) *The Film Experience: An Introduction*, Boston: Bedford/St Martin's (Chapter 1).

Gledhill, C. and Williams L. (eds) (2000) *Reinventing Film Studies*, London: Arnold.

Kochberg S. 'Cinema as institution' (2003) in J. Nelmes (ed.) *An Introduction to Film Studies*, London: Routledge.

Lacey, N. (2005) *Introduction to Film*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan (Chapter 3).

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.bbfc.co.uk (the British Board of Film Classification)

www.bfi.org.uk

www.disney.co.uk or disney.go.com

www.newscorp.com

www.sony.net

www.timewarner.com

(Websites such as the last four above give a powerful sense of the global reach of such corporations and an immediate visual impression of the range of interlocking media owned by each of them.)

www.cjr.org (up-to-date information on who owns what in the media entertainments industry)

8 STARS – WHAT ARE THEY AND WHY DO WE HAVE THEM?

This chapter deals with:

- viewing stars as commodities or products of the film industry;
- understanding stars as having commercial value;
- seeing stars as embodying certain social or cultural values and ideological perspectives.

NOTEBOX . . .

This section will be directly relevant to FS2 – Producers and Audiences for the WJEC AS level in Film Studies. (It will also be of relevance to the second year of the A level where you have the possibility of researching the work of a single star leaving his or her distinctive mark on a body of film. In addition, considered in conjunction with the section on performance and movement in Part 1 of this book and viewed in relation to the option on Performance Studies, this chapter will also be relevant to the final exam at the end of the full A level, FS6 – Critical Studies).

YOUR EXPERIENCE OF STARS

When studying film it is always best to begin by considering carefully your own experience. Therefore, when starting to look at the idea of stars and their role within films and the wider film industry this is the place to open your investigations. Try some initial questions:

- Who are your favourite stars? Whose latest film do you really look forward to seeing?
- Why? What is it about their work that you really like? Is it something about the sorts of characters that these people play that really engages your interest? Is it

something to do with the subject matter their films deal with, or the attitudes they put forward through their characters?

- Have the stars you like most changed over the years? Are there stars whose films you used to be interested in but no longer are? Have you recently taken an interest in the work of stars that never used to interest you? Why have these changes occurred?

STARS: THE CONCEPT

In the early days of Hollywood the studio bosses who ran the film industry were not too keen on the idea of 'stars'. And since you are now so aware of the fact that films are not so much an art form as a business (or at least, as much a business as an art form) you will immediately see why: quite simply, anonymous actors are not able to command large salaries, and it is only when you become famous and have a public waiting to see your next film that you are able to ask for more money to play the part. The first star known to her fans by her name is usually said to have been Florence Lawrence. Before 1910 she was simply known as 'the Biograph Girl' because she was seen in so many of that company's films (in 1909 for instance she performed in 81 short films!) but when she moved to the studio that was to become Universal she was named in the credits for the first time. She made the first ever personal appearance of a film star at St Louis in March 1910 and other studios followed suit with actors and actresses making a variety of media appearances.

The moment you turn actors into stars you implicitly acknowledge that they are a commercial asset to your business and that their presence is capable of attracting more paying punters than might otherwise come to see your film. At this point you potentially have to start paying at least the going rate and maybe an inflated rate to obtain the leading man and/or woman you want for your film. Studios recognized the chance to boost the ratings of their films by creating stars but they were also being driven by the public demand to know the names of these actors they kept seeing (and enjoying) in successive films. This points to the importance of actors in the filmmaking process but also, of course, to the importance (even from the earliest days of cinema) of fans – the passionate consumers of the industry's products.

ACTIVITY . . .

1. Find a poster for a film that uses a star of your choice as its central visual image. Analyse both the visual image itself and the overall layout of the poster in relation to the star.
2. How does the title of the film combined with any words used to describe the film relate to the public perception of the star in question? Does it seem to be the sort of film in which most people would expect to see this star? How does the title and/or other words used reinforce (or contradict) the notions people might have of this particular star?

3 How does the visual image given of the star work to create meaning and generate responses from us? Consider the posture or positioning of the body: is he or she standing, sitting or lying down? Why has this positioning been chosen? What does it suggest? How are other aspects of body language and facial expression, including eyes and mouth, working to create potential meanings? What about costume, hairstyle and any objects placed nearby or being held by the star? Do not forget to consider the camera angle being used, particular colours being employed (or maybe it is in black and white), and lighting. Remember each of these elements of construction will have been carefully chosen. Do they work to reinforce (or again, possibly contradict) certain ideas normally embodied in this star's image?

4 When you are sure about all of these things in your own mind, explain your understanding of the poster and the image of the star that is being conveyed to other people. Ask them if they would agree, or perhaps disagree at certain points, with your analysis and discuss the ideas that come up.

Around 100 years after actors' contributions began to be acknowledged via film credits the industry seems to have taken to the concept of stars with some enthusiasm since the cash paid to them is now often the largest component part of any top Hollywood film's budget. Furthermore, it is not unusual for big name stars to receive the script from the studio even before a director has been appointed to the film project and then to be asked if there is a director with whom he (and it still is predominantly 'he' rather than 'she') would like to work. This suggests that getting the right star name attached to a project is often seen as more important than obtaining the services of a particular director.

NOTEBOX . . .

Tom Cruise was paid a reported $75 million for *Mission Impossible* II (2000), $25 million plus a percentage of the profits for *The Last Samurai* (2003) and a straight 20 per cent of the profits for *War of the Worlds* (2005).

Stars and studios

The relationship between stars and the studios has never been an easy one: studios, aware as always of the financial bottom line, have not been keen to agree to increasing star salaries unless they have been forced to do so in order to protect the market share for their product. On the other hand studios were quick to realize that stars could help to sell their product: Charlie Chaplin, for instance, may have been an artist in front of the camera and a perfectionist as a director behind the camera but to the studio

Figure 8.1 *Publicity poster for* *Pirates of the Caribbean*
Source: Walt Disney / RGA

	Name	Movies	100+	Total Box Office
1	Tom Cruise	30	14	$2,917,132,893
2	Tom Hanks	35	14	$3,106,560,663
3	Eddie Murphy	30	11	$2,916,743,946
4	Harrison Ford	33	11	$3,255,071,666
5	Mel Gibson	35	11	$2,316,662,303
6	Samuel L. Jackson	66	11	$3,813,765,044
7	Jim Carrey	23	10	$2,021,169,088
8	Julia Roberts	31	10	$2,113,978,693
9	Morgan Freeman	41	10	$2,229,310,831
10	Will Smith	16	9	$1,827,463,970
11	John Ratzenberger	21	9	$2,256,208,920
12	Cameron Diaz	23	9	$1,857,922,767
13	James Earl Jones	42	9	$2,852,303,700
14	Robin Williams	45	9	$2,365,747,226
15	Robbie Coltrane	21	8	$1,812,419,083
16	Jim Cummings	27	8	$2,268,304,071
17	Arnold Schwarzenegger	27	8	$1,863,338,881
18	Sven-Ole Thorsen	30	8	$1,668,532,827
19	Dustin Hoffman	31	8	$1,867,154,906
20	Philip Baker Hall	33	8	$1,693,433,950

Figure 8.2 *The top 20 box office stars who have starred in movies that made more than $100 million*
Source: The Numbers www.the-numbers.com. Reproduced with permission

employing him he was first and foremost a guarantee of financial success. There is film of Chaplin, who was from London, returning to the city and being mobbed by literally thousands of people – such was his popularity. And it is that popularity that is the key to the issue of stars because it equates to power, the power to make money by guaranteeing the financial success of commercial films.

In the 1930s and 1940s under the studio system stars were held under the control of the studios by the use of tight contracts: each star had to take the projects offered or risk having their careers sidelined by the big film bosses running the studios. Stars were loaned out from one studio to another for the making of one-off films in exchange deals and their public image was carefully manufactured and then controlled by studio image makers. Some did, of course, try to take more control over their careers: it was, for instance, Chaplin who with two other mega-stars from the period, Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks, and the first Hollywood star director, D.W. Griffiths, moved to create their own production company, United Artists, as early as 1919, in order to distribute their own films and escape studio interference in the creative process.

The power may now have shifted in favour of the stars (and very importantly, their agents) compared with the situation during the studio system but the struggle between studios and stars has always been there as part of the equation of filmmaking. While studios have basically always wanted stars to reproduce the same winning formula that has proved successful in previous films, the stars themselves have often wanted to try to take on the challenge of playing different sorts of parts.

KEY TERM

AGENTS Not only actors but also directors, screenwriters, producers, cinematographers and others involved in commercial filmmaking have agents. The system under which these people would have been kept on full-time contracts to the studios came to an end during the 1950s, and from this point agents became especially important within the industry as they had the power to continually re-negotiate one-off film deals for those on their books.

The role of agents representing top stars is particularly powerful. If as a studio you believe it is the stars who really sell films you will be prepared to pay a large percentage of your budget to secure the services of the star you believe will best embody the image required for your film.

ACTIVITY . . .

1 List your favourite six stars and for each one describe, in no more than two sentences, what it is about them that you like. See if you can find out how much each of them was said to have been paid for their last film. What percentage of the budget for the whole film did this amount to?
2 Exchange your lists with others. See if there are any stars that appear on several people's lists. If so, how are they described? Are the same star qualities attributed to them by everyone in the group who has nominated them? Are these facets of their image the features that make them generally popular with fans?

3 Are there any actors put forward by one person that other people in the group would not describe as stars? If so, why? Discuss what it is that particular actors might lack that means that, in your opinion, they would not qualify as stars.
4 Compile a collective list grouping the stars according to whether they are male or female, black or white? Which group within each of these two splits contains the most names? Discuss why this might be?

(Your most useful starting point for this activity will probably be the Internet Movie Database (www.uk.imbd.com) a superb resource for this area of Film Studies.)

ACTIVITY . . .

1 Working with others, if possible, undertake a little research into the history of black actors in Hollywood. Your starting point will be to discuss how you are going to divide up the workload amongst members of the group.
   a Who was the first black actor who could really be described as a star in your opinion? What can you find out about him (or her)?
   b What sorts of roles did black actors have in early American cinema before 1920? What about under the studio system through into the 1950s?
   c Why did the status of black performers in Hollywood begin to change a little during the 1960s? What is the overall name given to the black political movement of the period in the US and what can you find out about it?
   d Which actors would you describe as the major black stars in Hollywood today? Can you find any short quotes (no more than two sentences) that seem to you to sum-up their star image?
2 Prepare an illustrated wall display (or perhaps a web page) to display your findings.

Stars as cultural products and media creations

In essence a star is a media-constructed image: Brad Pitt the actor, for example, has become something more than that which he started out in the film industry. He has become a multimedia presence within Western, or perhaps that should be within a now global culture. A star is created from a range of activities: the succession of roles taken up in films is of course critical, but there is also advertising, promotional work and media coverage to be considered as part of the process involved in the construction of a star. A star is not a person but a complex representation: in effect a cultural product. As spectators of his films, we know the performances of Brad Pitt, the actor. As fans we

also know Brad Pitt as a star who appears in our newspapers, in our film magazines, on our DVD extras and occasionally on our TV screens. But neither as simple viewers of the films nor as fans do we know Brad Pitt, the human being or the man.

ACTIVITY . . .

1. Take one contemporary Hollywood star and research the roles they have played throughout their career. Is there any sense of continuity between the roles? Do the types of characters played have any similarities? Has the way in which the actor has played these roles involved the use of similar character traits? Are there any particularly significant roles that have created this actor's star image? What would you say is physically distinctive about the way in which this actor is shown in their films? Is there anything distinctive about the delivery of lines, or about the body language employed from film to film?
2. Collect as much information as possible about your chosen star from current newspapers, magazines, fanzines, industry-based websites, fan-based websites and books over a period of a month.
3. Examine your material carefully to see how the media has worked over this period to construct the star's image. What are the key features of the media image of your chosen star? How are words and photographs used in the articles to construct this image? How important to their image as a star are their physical attributes (physique, bodily proportions, facial features, etc.)? How important in the construction of their star image are the attitudes and approaches to life attributed to them? How important are events in their personal life?

Stars as commercial products

So stars rather than being individuals might be seen as 'media constructs' with a specific role to play within the film industry. But if we consider stars to be controlled by big business organizations then we might also see them as commodities being produced to create profits as a result of consumers buying the image they embody. From this perspective it is not Brad Pitt the person that we need to understand if we are to gain insight into the role and place of stars within the film industry but 'Brad Pitt' the constructed media image. In financial terms, a star represents to the studio a certain capital outlay upon which a return is expected.

NOTEBOX . . .

William Bradley Pitt, the only person to twice be voted the 'sexiest man alive' by *People* magazine in the United States, has spent plenty of time in the media spotlight. One of the stars of *Troy* (2004) and *Ocean's Twelve* (2004), he has been romantically attached to Gwyneth Paltrow, Geena Davis and Juliette Lewis amongst others, as well as having been married to Jennifer Aniston for four years. He was first in *Company* magazine's '100 sexiest men' in 2004, sixth in VH1*'s* '100 Hottest Hotties', fiftieth in *Première* magazine's 'greatest movie stars of all time' and thirty-second in a similar poll in *Empire* magazine. For his first feature film in 1988 he was paid $1,500 a week for a seven week shoot: for *Mr and Mrs Smith* in 2005 he received a reported $20 million.

In keeping with this financial perspective stars are marketed in ways that deliberately emphasize particular facets of their constructed image in order to sell films. At the same time this market image also operates as a labelling mechanism denoting a particular type of star-related product to be found within the range of such brands available. So, if we go into a DVD rental outlet or walk past a cinema and see a certain star's name on a product on the shelf or on a poster outside the cinema door we will know what to expect if we choose to take this film home or go in to watch the movie. In this respect stars can be seen to work as one further means of organizing the film-related marketplace. Bruce Willis on a poster or DVD cover guarantees something different from Brad Pitt who in turn guarantees something different from Tom Cruise or from Jude Law.

Stars and lifestyle choices

This process of using stars to market and sell not only their films but perhaps certain associated life choices has intensified in recent years with the intensification of new technologies and the creation of a multimedia entertainments industry. But essentially the process itself is no different from the way in which film stars of the 1940s (and before) were also used to sell cigarettes, cosmetics or other lifestyle choices through and alongside their films.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Do stars influence the way in which ordinary people live their lives? Look back at all the material you have collected on stars through work you have done for this chapter so far. How might any of this material suggest stars could be influencing, or attempting to influence, the lives of people watching them or reading about them? What sorts of choices could the images portrayed of these stars encourage people to make about their own lives?
- Consider your own ideas on this carefully before discussing your thoughts with other people.

Today film stars might be said to have to compete with a much wider range of celebrity figures, from television and sport in particular, to gain coverage in the newspapers and magazines devoted to the lives and loves of stars. On the other hand, the proliferation of television channels and the arrival of the Internet means there are now many more spaces waiting to be filled with images, and details about the lives, of stars.

Interestingly, although stars are now said to have more power and influence within the industry than they did in the past, because of their dependence upon the media and the use to which their image is put to sell goods, they could be argued to be just as tied into promoting the capitalist ideology, or worldview, as they have ever been.

KEY TERM

IDEOLOGY A person's or a society's set of beliefs and values, or overall way of looking at the world. The Western world in general is said to be built upon a belief in capitalism, or the idea that what is best for society, or what brings the greatest benefits to a society, is for business to be given free rein to operate without restrictions in an open, competitive market.

Stars and the nature of their power

What is being suggested here is that the only 'power' stars have is the power to make money both for themselves and for other people. Out of a range of potentially commercially viable projects they may be able to determine which gets 'green-lit' but they do not have carte blanche to get any film they please with any messages and values they like up and running. Their power, such as it is, depends upon a status that is derived directly from their place within the media entertainments industry; if they lose (or choose to begin to abandon) the Midas touch that has enabled them to become one of the chosen few A-list stars then their options for their next film project immediately diminish. The size and site of the 'soap-box' available to them from which they may occasionally back what they see as 'worthy' causes is a precise reflection of their value as a commercial asset.

ACTIVITY . . .

Do you agree with the above point of view completely, partially or not at all? Discuss your thoughts on this with others, if possible. Try to decide how you see the power of stars. How much power do they have within the film industry and how far does it extend? Do you know of any examples of stars who have been able to exert a serious influence on any of the film projects in which they have been involved?

(This is a difficult issue. You are being asked to think about something you may well not have previously considered. We tend to simply take for granted the nature

of the world around us, but the questions being raised here hopefully require you to go beyond this. You are being asked to question the whole basis of the way things are within the Hollywood-dominated film industry.

At this stage, you are not expected to necessarily come up with any final conclusions. You are simply being asked to consider the questions being raised seriously for yourself and to listen carefully and thoughtfully to the responses of others.)

KEY TERM

'GREEN-LIT' This is a jargon term used within the film industry for obtaining the 'go-ahead' for a film project to move from being a concept to actually starting production.

ACTIVITY . . .

1 Research the work of two recent stars, such as Sean Penn or Tim Robbins, who have been politically outspoken and radical in their views.
2 List the films they have worked on, outlining for each the storyline and any messages you believe the audience is supposed to take away.
3 How have your chosen stars been presented/ treated by the film industry and the media? What projects or political issues have they been involved in outside filmmaking, and how have these things been presented in the media?
4 For each of them define what you see as being their political stance (200 words).
5 Name two or three films for each in which you believe you can best see their political stance embodied. Try to identify particularly strong scenes as evidence.
6 Show one of your chosen scenes to the class and explain the thinking behind your choice of star and film clip.

Stars as embodying social values

Each star has a specific relationship to film audiences; they are known by audiences for the types of characters they portray and for the attitudes and values their characters seem to embody. (They might also be said to have a further more intense relationship to those individuals within these audiences who choose to become fans.) Within their roles in films each star might be said to carry certain meanings, to endorse or reject certain lifestyle choices.

And, since audiences often consume stars for the meanings they represent in their films (but also in their lives as displayed in the wider media) this can be a powerful way of ensuring the public buys into a certain range of perceptions and outlooks. Essentially what is suggested here is that film, like all other media, has the power to influence the ways in which we live our lives: one of the ways in which we can be brought to understand and see things in certain ways is through the influence of stars.

NOTEBOX . . .

'Audiences often consume stars for the meanings they represent.' Watch out for phrases like this in any text you read: phrases that sound like they should mean something but are initially perhaps quite difficult to understand. Such phrases need to be considered carefully: they may be jargon and as such poor writing; they might be gobbledegook that actually when you analyse it means very little; or they might actually contain a useful idea that you just need to consider a little more in order to fully understand.

Any books you read may contain (indeed, should contain) sentences that demand a little more thought and effort on the part of the reader than usual. The question might be how much time and effort you are prepared to put in.

(Notice how this particular phrase sees the people watching films as essentially 'consuming' something and stars in films as essentially embodying 'meanings'. These are two key ideas for this chapter.)

Gender, race and stardom

Female stars from Marilyn Monroe to Jennifer Aniston are often presented on and off screen in such a way as to re-confirm male ideas of the sexual woman. Sometimes, however, in the roles they play in films they might be seen to threaten or challenge male notions of sexuality and dominance. Men may like to look at women in films (and elsewhere) in certain ways but they might in reality be rather threatened by the sexual power exuded by the very personifications they desire to see.

ACTIVITY . . .

1 Research the work of any contemporary female star. What sorts of roles does she play? Is she strong, powerful and independent, or weak, manipulated and at the mercy of others? What are the main themes and ideas to be found in her films?
2 Define what you see as being her main type of role (200 words).

3 Name two or three films in which you believe you can see her playing this central type of role. Try to identify particularly strong scenes as evidence.
4 Show one of your chosen scenes to the class and explain the thinking behind your choice of star and film clip.

Where would black stars fit into this pattern? Certainly both female and black actors occupy only a limited number of spots within the A-list of stars. Does this simply reflect a social reality? Or, does it re-confirm (and work to perpetuate) the values of a male-dominated essentially racist society? And, if it does, is this part of the role and function of the star system? Obviously we can consider such issues for ourselves in relation to any stars we care to examine. The key point is that it is important for us not to simply accept such a phenomenon as 'stars and stardom' but rather to question and explore the basis on which it comes into being and continues to be of importance for cinema.

Figure 8.3 *Publicity shot of Gwyneth Paltrow Source: © Theo Kingman_ Idols. Courtesy of www.idols.co.uk*

Stars and ideology

Stars exist within a film industry that is owned and controlled by certain extremely powerful vested interests. As a result is it inevitable that stars have to adopt attitudes and assumptions that support the current status quo? Or can they in some way challenge current attitudes and ways of looking at the world while continuing to be allowed to operate within the industry? Can the process of reinforcing (and/or subverting) attitudes be seen at work both in the filmmaking process and within the resulting films themselves? Is it inevitable given the powerful position within society occupied by the major film studios especially when they form part of some multi-national conglomerate that most films and most stars will reinforce attitudes approved by those studios?

ACTIVITY . . .

- How do you feel about each of these issues?
- Organize a debate in which one side suggests (with the support of examples) that film works to reinforce accepted norms and values and the other side argues (again with the support of examples) that films work to challenge and perhaps undermine existing norms and values.

EXAMPLE EXAM QUESTIONS

1 To what extent are star images controlled by the film industry?

2 To what extent are fans now able to determine the success or failure of individual stars?

3 What are some of the ways in which fans and the film industry work together to create a star's image?

CONCLUSION

In order to study film it is important:

- to maintain a thoughtful and perceptive awareness of the fact that stars can be seen as an integral commercial aspect of the film industry;
- to see stars on one level at least as capable of embodying social and cultural perspectives in their roles and performances.

FURTHER READING

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9 HOLLYWOOD BACK IN THE DAY AND HOLLYWOOD TODAY – OLD HOLLYWOOD AND NEW HOLLYWOOD

This chapter deals with:

- production under Old Hollywood and New Hollywood;
- distribution under Old Hollywood and New Hollywood;
- exhibition under Old Hollywood and New Hollywood;
- continuity between Old Hollywood and New Hollywood;
- a wider historical perspective on Hollywood.

NOTEBOX . . .

This chapter will be directly relevant to FS2 – Producers and Audiences for the WJEC AS Level in Film Studies. (Considered in conjunction with work on Fandom and Hollywood and indigenous film production in the A2 book on Film Studies in this series this chapter will also be relevant to the final exam at the end of the full A Level, FS6 – Critical Studies.)

OLD HOLLYWOOD–NEW HOLLYWOOD: A SIMPLIFICATION

As has already been made quite clear, films go through production, distribution and exhibition phases; they have to be made, brought to the attention of the public and then shown. However, the relative importance of each of these three areas for Hollywood has been subject to change over time. Under the studio system a few major companies tried as much as possible to make, distribute and show their own films, thereby effectively exerting direct control over all three stages of the process. But this system, also known as Old Hollywood, began to break up in the 1950s as the film business began to evolve different industrial strategies to try to meet new challenges, particularly those offered by the advent of TV as a competitive medium and the movement of people out of town into newly developed suburbs and away from the old

established cinemas. Old Hollywood came to be replaced by New Hollywood with the major studios not so involved in making their own films, but increasingly interested in financing independent productions and then controlling their distribution.

Of course, this is an oversimplification. The studio system of the 1930s, 1940s and early 1950s was never static but was instead constantly changing, or evolving, whether in response to economic factors such as the Depression of the 1930s or external influences such as the Second World War. Within the general industrial framework known as the Studio System individual studios were also attempting different commercial strategies at different times. In the same way, so-called New Hollywood has followed a similar pattern, constantly adjusting to meet new challenges and take advantage of new commercial opportunities over the past 50 years.

NOTEBOX . . .

Beware of 'oversimplification' and the advocacy of any one line of thought in a textbook or any other piece of writing. Be prepared to think for yourself. In doing so you will sometimes be wrong and need to be prepared to admit the fact but this is much preferable to simply accepting anything you are told. Be prepared to try to find out more about any subject area so that you are in a position to judge whether to accept what you have been told, wholly, partially or not at all.

Old Hollywood's unit-producer system

During the early years of the Studio System a few top executives such as Jack Warner and Darryl Zanuck at Warner Brothers would oversee all film production, effectively keeping a tight personal control over everything that was going on in 'their' studio. But in some studios this strong top-down management was later modified into a 'unit-producer system' where a crew worked together under one producer to complete six to eight films a year. These teams of workers, employed directly by the studio, would sometimes specialize in a particular genre: examples often given include Arthur Freed's unit at MGM which specialized in musicals, Val Lawton's horror unit at RKO and Jerry Wald's unit at Warners specializing in noir melodramas. (If you have not yet found time to watch *Mildred Pierce* (Curtiz, 1945) see if you can find time to do so since this will provide you with an excellent example of noir-melodrama.) This was clearly an economically sound way of working since everybody in the team would become a specialist on a particular type of film and therefore able to set up equipment efficiently and effectively. Those responsible for setting up the lighting, for example, could become noir melodrama, musical or horror specialists and as a result able to create the desired genre lighting effects with the minimum of direction, thereby saving time and most importantly money.

ACTIVITY . . .

1 Research any studio of your choice that was in business during the 1930s and 1940s.
2 Try to sum up in note form the key developments in its evolution during this period using no more than one side of A4 paper.
3 Find other people who have researched other studios and exchange copies of your notes for copies of theirs in order to try to compile a package giving details of several studios from this period.
4 Find a film that you think shows the work of your chosen studio during this period particularly well and, if possible, show an extract to other people studying film. As you do so explain the making of the film identifying important personnel who worked on it and explaining their roles, and also pointing out where, how and when it was filmed.

New Hollywood's package unit system

By contrast, in contemporary Hollywood there is what is known as a 'package-unit' system at work: studio space is rented and personnel hired for the duration of the one project. Individual producers now have to put together a one-off package of finance, personnel, equipment and studio time for each film being made. The studios no longer have to be concerned with keeping busy what was effectively a factory full of workers permanently on their payroll; instead arrangements can be made to film each one-off production wherever is most convenient around the world, perhaps in places where union laws might be less stringent and rates of pay considerably lower. The main Hollywood companies were driven over to this system in an effort to cut expenditure in the 1950s in order to survive in the face of the decline of cinema-going as a leisure activity.

ACTIVITY . . .

You might like to try to look into the changes in leisure patterns and indeed home lifestyle that evolved in the US after the Second World War. In what ways is it usually suggested that life changed for the majority of Americans at this time? Try to list as many features as possible of the new way of life that emerged post-1945.

ACTORS, DIRECTORS AND AGENTS

Actors and directors have always been key personnel in the industry, but under Old Hollywood structures they were very much subservient to studio producers and executives. They were told to work on one project and then when that was finished they

were assigned by their studio bosses to a new project: contracted to the studios they were quite simply at the beck-and-call of those studios. Stars sometimes tried to resist being typecast or undertaking a project that they did not feel was right for them in some other way, but in doing so they risked being sidelined by the studio which effectively had the power to make or break their career.

ACTIVITY . . .

Try to find one star from the period of the Studio System who had confrontations with his or her studio management. What were the disputes over and what were the outcomes?

Nowadays both directors and stars have agents cutting deals for them and they (and their agents) have become relatively much more powerful within the business especially since they are no longer held under exclusive contracts to one particular studio as they were in the past. It could be argued that since the 1970s, agencies have perhaps become the real power brokers in Hollywood controlling stables of stars, directors, screenwriters, cinematographers, producers and other filmmaking personnel and striking deals for clients in return for a percentage of earnings. A possible analogy would be with British football where there has been increasing concern in recent years that agents have become the most powerful behind-the-scenes people in the game: every footballer is signed to an agent and it is the agent who negotiates a player's contract with a club.

ACTIVITY . . .

1 Find out the names of the major agencies in Hollywood. When were they each set up and who now runs each of them? Can you find out what stars they have on their books?
2 Were there agencies around during the Studio System? If so, how powerful were they during this period and were there any particular limitations on their power?
3 When did agencies begin to have more power and what changes in the film industry brought this about?
4 If possible, share the information you find out with others making sure you agree on the fundamental details and discussing your answers to 2 and 3 above to see if you have come up with the same basic ideas.

PRODUCERS

Finding themselves under the financial pressures outlined above in the 1950s, the studios were prepared to support the emergence of independent producers who offered

them greater business flexibility enabling them to pick and choose projects. The studios could back a particular production with these independent producers without any need to bankroll a workforce that stretched from stars to catering staff on a long-term basis. But this change also opened up the possibility of top creative personnel like stars and directors being able to negotiate freelance deals.

Under the Studio System producers exerted overall management control at any one time across a range of film projects that might be at various stages of completion. They would bring together a team of workers to complete each project under the supporting umbrella of the studio. With the end of the Studio System, producers retained their importance with regard to each one-off film project since they remained the lynchpin executive needed to bring together the total package.

ACTIVITY . . .

Take any film you have seen recently and find out who produced it. Then try to find out more about this person. What was their role on this particular production? What have they and others had to say about their involvement and contribution? What projects had he or she been involved in before?

The place of cheaper products within a big budget industry

The big players in the industry have of course always been interested in cheap-to-produce films that were likely to offer good percentage profits. In the era of Old Hollywood companies such as Columbia and Universal invested in cheap B-movies (as opposed to expensive A-movies) from early in the 1930s. As the Depression hit America some cinemas began trying to attract hard-up customers by offering two feature films instead of one creating a demand for these cheap supporting films. By the mid-1930s up to half of the output at Warners, Fox and RKO were also taken up with these films.

At the same time about 10 per cent of studio output in the 1930s and 1940s was made up of 'series pictures' such as those made by Warners using the 'Dead End Kids' or MGM's 'Andy Hardy' series starring Mickey Rooney.

NOTEBOX . . .

Incidentally, it is often suggested that the market for films under Old Hollywood was much more homogenized, that is that there was a single market to be catered for rather than a series of smaller market segments with differing demands. But 'series pictures' such as these show that the segmented nature of the market was recognized at the time with teenage audiences in particular, for example, being targeted by the 'Dead End Kids' films.

ACTIVITY . . .

- See what you can find out about the 'Dead End Kids' series (or another series from the 1930s and 1940s of your own choice). How many films were made in the series? How popular were they?
- If you have the time, try to watch *Angels With Dirty Faces* (Curtiz, 1938) to see how the popular concept of the 'Dead End Kids' could be integrated into a bigger budget film.

In more recent times there may not be B-movies but there are similar products such as made-for-TV movies. At the same time big studios have more recently recognized (especially on the back of the success of films coming out of the Sundance Film Festival for independent American films, perhaps) the potential profitability of low cost films and have as a result set up arms-length low-budget companies such as Fox Searchlight at Twentieth Century Fox.

ACTIVITY . . .

1. What is the Sundance Festival? How long has it been going? What well-known films have first been shown there? How has it changed over the time it has been running?
2. What other film festivals do you know of? Create a list of festivals with an indication of the time of year each takes place. Also where possible try to explain briefly what the key focus is for each festival according to the organizers. Share information with others and try to come up with a class list.
3. Try to agree on a ratings list for the festivals perhaps from 1 to 3 showing whether the festival is 'very important', 'quite important' or 'less important'. What factors make this a difficult exercise?
4. Produce a chart listing the festivals in some way and illustrated as you see fit (perhaps for publication on a college website).

PRODUCTION: AN OVERVIEW

Although the film industry has clearly changed in many ways since the 1930s and 1940s you could argue it is the similarities that are most striking. For example, the teenage market was recognized from quite early on, as was the place within the industry of cheap, quickly made films alongside those demanding larger budgets.

ACTIVITY . . .

1 Draw up two lists alongside each other, one showing the key features of contemporary Hollywood with examples (e.g. star directors such as Spielberg and Scorsese) and the other highlighting parallel features of Hollywood during the studio system (e.g. star directors such as Ford and Hawks).
2 Get together with other people if possible and compare the lists you have managed to compile. Use each other's ideas to add to your own lists.

Similarly, although it is true that the status and power of stars has changed, a further constant factor within the business has been the way in which stars have always been used to promote and sell the film product. One of the major types of film on offer during the Studio System era was the feature film marketed and made as a 'star vehicle' to show off the qualities that made the particular star attractive to his or her target audience. In this environment, stars signed to particular studios were seen as a hugely valuable resource. Nowadays, as we have said, stars receive massive salaries compared with their counterparts under the Old Hollywood structures but in fact this only reflects their continued importance in marketing and securing box-office returns: they are being used by the industry we could argue in very similar ways to the 1930s and 1940s. (On the other hand, it is true to say that stars are now often additionally important in securing finance for a project: if as a producer you can get a top star signed up to a project, the other parts of the package are likely to begin to fall into place.)

NOTEBOX . . .

One possible approach to any question that asks how Old Hollywood is different from New Hollywood is for you to recognize the differences between the two periods but at the same time to work to point out that it could be suggested that it is actually the similarities that are most striking.

Related to the role of stars there is also of course the way in which the 'star–genre' formula has been utilized in both Old and New Hollywood. At Warners, during the Classical Hollywood period for instance, it could be argued that the presence of James Cagney and Edward G. Robinson meant a cycle of crime dramas and gangster films were likely to be inevitable products of this studio. The genre approach and linking of particular stars to particular genres has continued to be used by New Hollywood since it still seems to continue to work as an effective marketing strategy: in effect the 'star–genre' relationship means a known, tried and tested product is being guaranteed to the customer. The British actor, Hugh Grant may have succeeded in creating something of a career for himself in Hollywood but it is on Hollywood's terms. Grant guarantees the re-production in film after film of a certain 'loveable young man, requiring mothering', a romantic comedy character that the industry finds particularly useful in attracting an audience (and therefore profit) for a certain genre of film.

ACTIVITY . . .

- List your favourite Hollywood film actors and beside each note the genre (or genres) most usually attached to each.
- Make a note of any roles in which this actor has stepped outside his or her normal character portrayal and genre framework.
- Consider whether these films that show the actor outside of his or her normal range were successful or not at the box office. If they were relatively unsuccessful reflect on whether you think the change in expected role for this actor could have had anything to do with the lack of success.
- Because of their increased power within the industry, do contemporary stars have more opportunities to move outside a small potentially typecasting range of parts than the stars of Old Hollywood? If possible, discuss this with a small group of other people studying film.

DISTRIBUTION IN OLD HOLLYWOOD AND NEW HOLLYWOOD

Despite having their production 'factories' located in sunny California (the sun of course meant that you could film outside for longer each day and for more days in a year), during the studio era all the major studios had New York offices that were the site of ultimate power. It was from here that finance, marketing and sales were controlled. The industry during this period was entirely market-driven and commercially motivated: today at this fundamental level nothing is any different. It is still within production, finance and distribution that the major studios hold most power and in many cases we are still talking about the same companies that dominated the 1930s and 1940s: Paramount, Warner Brothers, Columbia, Universal, Disney and Twentieth Century Fox. The control of advertising and promotion networks guarantees a market for the products of these major corporations; and it is the distributor who dictates the terms of any deals agreed with both producers and exhibition outlets.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Over a period of several weeks collect data on the top ten films in the US and Britain (available in several weekend newspapers and film magazines).
- Note the distributors of each film, taking particular note of which names occur most frequently. But also look to see how much their films are taking because one successful blockbuster could take more than the accumulated total made by several other films with less financial backing.

NOTEBOX . . .

Remember to be aware of the key strategic position occupied by the distributor. The producers of films can in theory make any films they want and as many films as they wish; however, if they cannot get the films out to the public, that is they cannot distribute them, then their films will never be seen. Exhibitors can in theory show any films they like in their cinemas; however, in practice they can only screen films the distributors are willing to let them have. Therefore, in effect, if you have control over distribution then you have control over the whole film industry.

In the studio era, in addition to A-movies and B-movies, studios also occasionally put out more expensive 'prestige pictures', such as MGM's *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), released in selected first-run cinemas. Today high cost, potentially lucrative 'special attractions' such as Twentieth Century Fox's *Titanic* (Cameron, 1997) might be said to fulfil the same function; but now immediate saturation of the marketplace, flooding the film into as many cinemas as possible from the first weekend, would be the opening strategy. In both eras the films make a statement about the power of the studios involved. Despite the costs involved, it is still calculated in both cases that the film will make money, although it has to be said that Twentieth Century Fox studio boss, Bill Mechanic, is on record as saying *Titanic* was definitely not meant to cost as much as it did with the director, James Cameron, apparently continually going over budget.

The recognition of films as viable commercial propositions

In America a key factor in the film industry's commercial success has been the way in which it has received backing from both the banks and the government. Wall Street bankers became especially important in backing the industry during the Depression of the 1930s while the government basically condoned the control over the industry operated by just a few powerful companies (by 1939 the Big Five controlled about 2,600 cinemas, only about 15 per cent of the total but 80 per cent of the metropolitan first-run cinemas). And although the studios were forced by court intervention to back away from vertical integration in the 1950s this in fact only worked to strengthen their economic position within the changing circumstances of the period. They were able to reduce costs while reinforcing their control over distribution, the most important sector within the film business.

Today the US government continues to show it is fully aware of the worldwide importance of its film industry and negotiates to secure global trade deals that are as favourable as possible to Hollywood. The central international body regulating world trade, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) which was replaced by the World Trade Organization in 1995, has since shortly after the Second World War worked towards 'the liberalization of world trade'. In practice this has meant opening up as many areas as possible within the global market to products from the rich

industrialized countries of the West. In relation to the film industry, the US has consistently argued that other countries should not be able to operate trade policies designed to defend their film industries against American competition. In Europe, France and Italy in particular have tried to limit the market for Hollywood products in their countries. In Britain at any one time more than 90 per cent of screens are showing American films.

ACTIVITY . . .

1 In groups choose one national newspaper each and for the next week photocopy any articles you can find that are in any way related to the film industry.
2 Spend time comparing the articles you have come up with. How many articles have you managed to find in each paper? Do some papers seem to give more coverage to film-related issues than others? Do they all cover the same issues?
3 Were there any articles in the business sections of papers? Remember, these could be about a parent company or multinational corporation that has involvement in a wide range of media with film production, distribution and/or exhibition only being a one part of their operations. Were there any articles that discussed world trade agreements?
4 Have any members of the group chosen articles that other people would not at first have thought were related to the film industry?

NOTEBOX . . .

Reading an upmarket newspaper is probably one of the best ways to keep abreast of changes happening in the film industry. (It will also help you to improve your use of language, discovering new ways of structuring sentences and widening your vocabulary.) Start off by simply trying to find a couple of articles a week that seem interesting and perhaps in some way relevant to your studies.

Awareness of the importance of marketing

Marketing might be said to be an increasingly important part of the industry with budgets for this part of the operation in some cases almost matching production costs (although in truth the importance of selling the product often as an escapist fantasy has always been recognized by Hollywood). For the studios, marketing (as covered in the first chapter of this part) essentially involves:

- securing free publicity in the editorial sections of the media whenever possible;
- devising eye-catching paid-for advertising;

- obtaining tie-ins with other consumer products that will result in symbiotic promotional pay-offs for both products;
- clinching merchandising deals that will create additional income but also further work to keep film product as a whole in the public eye.

Clear summer, Christmas and spring holiday blockbuster seasons have now emerged; and films are perhaps being reviewed by critics with increased seriousness as art as well as entertainment.

However, as suggested above, do keep in mind that this is nothing new for the industry. Gimmicky publicity stunts, merchandising, and magazines devoted to the stars and their films were also features of the studio system; the pressure to see film as an art form as well as entertainment goes back to the silent era; and gossip-driven interest in the lives, loves and lies of stars has been a constant feature of the media.

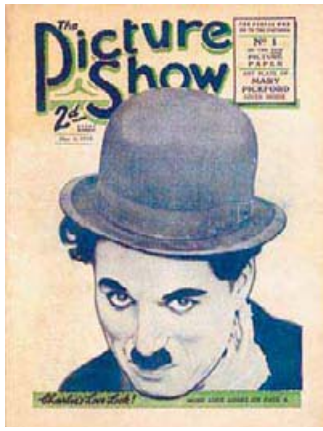

Figure 9.1 *Vintage movie magazines*
Source: © IPC+ Syndication

ACTIVITY . . .

1. Go through the *Radio Times* or a similar magazine showing next week's TV schedules and make a note of the film review shows available according to channel, day and time.
2. Record as many of these programmes as possible and watch them with a group of fellow students if possible.
3. How do the shows compare? Do they review the same films? Do they handle their reviews in similar or different ways? Are there features that make each show distinctively different? How serious-minded would you say each show is aiming to be?
4. Does each show seem to be targeted at a particular audience? Can you find out each show's ratings? Which is the most popular? From your viewing why would you think this is the case?

Willingness to integrate independents into the system

The major Hollywood studios have always it seems been willing to integrate independent companies into the industry. In a sense in doing so, they have only been responding to business pressures so that, for example, as the studio system began to break up they were increasingly willing to use independent companies often almost as arm's length production units. This attitude could be seen as further evidence of the sensible business pragmatism displayed by the studios for the most part since the earliest days.

There were several factors moving the industry towards using independent companies for film production during the 1940s and 1950s.

- With cinema attendance rising there was increased demand for top feature films during the Second World War and this meant studios were prepared to distribute independent films to help meet this demand. Production facilities and financing as well as distribution expertise would be provided by the studio for these films. An example of this trend would be Frank Capra's *Meet John Doe* (1940) which was made with Warners.
- At the same time an increased number of people within the industry also began to work as 'hyphenates' that is they fulfilled two major roles on any single film. This accorded them increased status and power within the industry: examples would be producer-director Mitchell Leisen and writer-director Preston Sturges at Paramount.
- Also the Screen Actors Guild (recognized by the studios in 1938), the Screen Directors Guild (1939) and the Screen Writers Guild (1941) emerged as collective organizations prepared to challenge total studio control. In this changing atmosphere top 'talent' such as Howard Hawks, for example, began to work on a freelance basis.

In a sense this trend has continued so that independent filmmakers like Spike Lee have established their own production companies. However, it still remains the case that these production companies depend for distribution on the majors: Paramount, Warner Brothers (Time-Warner-AOL), Universal Pictures (Matsushita), Twentieth Century Fox (News Corporation), Disney, and Columbia Pictures (Sony), so that ultimate control of the industry remains with these organizations.

Often successful independents which go on to distribute their own films end up being taken over by one of the big names. New Line, for example, was quite successful in the early 1990s but was taken over by Turner Broadcasting which became part of Time Warner in 1996. Miramax, another successful independent from the period was taken over by Disney in 1994.

Importance of the overseas market

It is also the case that from its inception as an industry the American film business recognized the importance of the overseas market. The domestic market was large enough to sustain the industry independently and yet there was still a willingness to consider in particular possibilities offered by the European market. By the late 1930s Hollywood derived more than 30 per cent of its revenue from overseas markets with 45 per cent of this coming from Britain and a further 30 per cent from continental Europe. Today, although other areas of the world especially Japan have become increasingly important within the US overseas market, the essential fact remains the same in that a huge onus is put on securing global sales with blockbusters regularly grossing more abroad than in the US.

Willingness to adapt to new technologies

When radio in the home posed an alternative to cinema for family entertainment in the late 1920s, the industry quickly adopted sound. When television posed a similar threat in the 1950s the industry quickly adopted colour, widescreen and other new technologies in an effort to beat off the new rival. Clearly TV sets used small screens and were initially only available in black and white so adopting colour and widescreen were obvious ways of marking out the cinema experience as something special.

In its battle against TV, the industry was certainly not entirely successful with the decline in cinema attendance through the 1950s and 1960s mirroring the uptake of TV sets in the home. But it still remains the case that overall the cinema industry has always been responsive to potentially alternative new technologies intruding into their marketplace.

Although initially perceiving new technologies as a threat, the industry, especially in recent years, has been quick to make use of them for their own ends. Hollywood has capitalized on new markets in the home and at the multiplex, utilizing cable and satellite film channels to get TV viewers to pay for films they watch at home. (It is worth stopping to consider carefully the extent of the use the film industry now makes of TV, which was initially seen as such a threat.)

The industry made similar use first of videos and then DVDs. By 1986 video sales surpassed box-office takings in the US, and by the 1990s the rentals and sales market was worth more than $10 billion; and yet seemingly this did not detract from cinema-going with 20 million a week visiting multiplexes in the US by the early 1990s.

The theatrical release is still the key commercial moment for any film in the sense that success or failure here determines the profitability of any deals that are going to be secured for the release of the product into other 'windows': you can obviously charge cable and satellite suppliers, terrestrial television companies and overseas distributors more for the rights to a film that has been a success on its initial release. But the key factor is that there is now an array of further marketing opportunities for any film over and beyond its cinema release.

ACTIVITY . . .

1 The balance between box-office takings and income from DVD rentals and sales can obviously change each year. From research (perhaps on the Internet, where the UK Film Council website would be a good starting point) can you find out the current situation? Can you find out the trend over recent years?
2 How does the number of cinema tickets sold in a year compare to number of DVDs rented and sold?
3 What happens when you include illegal DVD sales? How accurate are 'guesstimates' in this area?

Control of exhibition outlets

Eight companies dominated the 1930s and 1940s: five corporations (Paramount, Loew's (later MGM), Fox Film (later Twentieth Century Fox), Warner Brothers, and Radio-Keith-Orpheum (RKO)) who each ran a studio, undertook marketing and distribution, and owned a chain of cinemas, and three smaller companies (Universal, Columbia, and United Artists) owning no cinemas but co-operating with the 'Big Five' to control the industry. Films went to cinemas owned by the 'Big Five' for first-runs (Paramount owned over 1,000 cinemas during the 1940s) and only then to independent cinemas. These independents often had to accept 'block booking' of a corporation's output and 'blind buying'. This system was known as vertical integration, namely the main studios operated within each of the three main areas within the industry – production, distribution and exhibition.

KEY TERM

'BLOCK BOOKING' This means you have to agree to take all of the films produced by a studio in a year including the lesser films in order to get the major productions.

KEY TERM

'BLIND BUYING' This means you have to take the films on offer without having a chance to first view them to see if you want them or not.

KEY TERM

VERTICAL INTEGRATION The way in which studios in the 1930s and 1940s integrated the whole process from making to screening films under their control.

Although this oligopoly situation was broken in the 1950s, following a 1948 court ruling against Paramount which found that such extensive control of the industry was illegal, the industry giants seem to have re-established similar if not stronger control today. Despite being forced to divest themselves of cinemas in the 1950s the majors had interests in 14 per cent of US and Canadian screens by the late 1980s with four cinema circuits controlling almost 30 per cent of exhibition outlets in the US and the top 12 cinema circuits controlled 45 per cent of cinemas. Paramount, Universal and Warners have significant UK exhibition interests in that out of about 200 exhibition companies, six (Odeon, Virgin, Warner Village, ABC, UCI and National Amusements/Showcase) take 80 per cent of box-office revenues.

KEY TERM

OLIGOPOLY A term used to describe the situation in which a small group of companies exerts powerful, almost exclusive, control over the business being done within any particular industry.

(Please note: this is not the same as a monopoly which is where just one company dominates a whole industry.)

Target audiences

It could be argued that target audiences have changed since the Studio System days with major companies such as AMC (American Multi-Cinema) in the US aiming to locate their multiplexes in 'middle-class areas inhabited by college-educated families'. Perhaps audiences were much more predominantly working class in the 1930s and 1940s.

It could also be argued that the market is now much more strongly divided into segments with a range of screens catering to a range of tastes. And yet, genre and star categorizations of product always meant the Hollywood product was in fact carefully

differentiated for specifically targeted market segments. So, perhaps the audience was not really that much more homogeneous in the Classical Hollywood period.

Domination of the major studios over distribution means they effectively continue to control exhibition since no exhibitor is going to jeopardize retaining a major source of income. In addition, of course, the Hollywood product has the advantage of massive financial resources for marketing and production.

Cinemas and multiplexes

The multiplex has perhaps made the cinema experience somewhat different from that of the 1930s and 1940s, although, even then, the effort was often to sell the total experience of the evening out rather than simply the film. Just consider, as suggested earlier, the picture palaces of the 1930s and 1940s. These were huge cavernous spaces, palace-like in their dimensions and in their décor. Compare this with the homes that most of the punters were coming from. Remember also that the clients would be waited on by uniformed ushers and usherettes and then you will realize that the idea of selling 'the whole experience' is nothing new in the cinema business. All of which is not to say that the multiplex has not played a major role in reviving cinema fortunes in the UK: the year before the opening of the first multiplex in Milton Keynes in 1985 attendance was down to 52 million admissions per year, but by 1996 that was up to more than 123 million.

Conclusion: difference or continuity?

The simple fact is that the major studios continue to dominate the film industry with takeovers and mergers within the wider media entertainments industry ('horizontal integration') only serving to further reinforce this control. It could be argued in the 1960s and 1970s there was some loss of control for the major Hollywood studios but it could also be argued that since the mid-1980s the major studios have regained the sort of overall level of control over production, distribution and exhibition that they enjoyed in the 1930s and 1940s.

The major difference is that now the income of these studios is no longer so dependent upon immediate box-office takings. Cinema exhibition is important and initial success here means guaranteed profits in every succeeding sales window associated with the film. However, powerful marketing, global distribution and the ability to sell essentially the same product again and again in a variety of 'windows' around the world means losses can generally be avoided on even the biggest box-office 'flop'.

Exam questions and the historical perspective

When you take the AS-Level exam on the film industry and its workings entitled 'Producers and Audiences' you could well be faced with a question that essentially asks how the US has managed to dominate the global film market for so long. One way of dealing with this would be to adopt a historical approach. This does not mean regurgitating a series of dates: it simply means being aware that the film industry has

developed and changed over the course of more than 100 years but more particularly that it has in terms of emphasizing the central importance of returning profits shown great continuity of purpose, flexibly adapting itself to economic and political contingencies as and when necessary.

- The early pioneers in film production were based in Europe with early filmmaking notably going on in Britain, France and Germany. However, you could justifiably argue the early commercial pioneers were found in the US and perhaps particularly in Hollywood. These people introduced quick production systems, distribution outlets, and chains of purpose-built cinemas ('nickelodeons'). Crucially they also had the natural advantage of a large ready-made domestic market being available. And this early economic advantage taken by American entrepreneurs was further reinforced when the First World War devastated the European economy and the US took the opportunity to begin widespread distribution in this new market.
- The Golden Age of Hollywood in the 1930s and 1940s was in many ways built around a continually developing studio system. This was a factory-style system for the production of films that no European country was able to match (apart perhaps from Germany during the 1920s). The 'Big Five' (and the 'Little Three') studios:
  - developed 'vertical integration', controlling production, distribution and exhibition of films;
  - continued mass production throughout the Second World War while Europe was again otherwise occupied;
  - and flooded Europe with their back catalogue of products after the war at the precise moment when cinema audiences were peaking.
- When a court ruling against Paramount in 1948 effectively ended vertical integration, the major studios made a strategic business decision to hold on to the distribution arms of their businesses. What they recognized was that if you controlled distribution you also controlled production and exhibition. In the new economic environment for film caused by the advent of TV, risk was offloaded by using independent production companies for one-off projects. Financial security was safeguarded by takeovers that saw the studios becoming subsidiary companies within umbrella corporations owning a wide-ranging portfolio of quite disparate companies.
- During the 1980s video was belatedly recognized as a co-functioning medium (something that could be used to support and magnify the impact of film) and was integrated into the film business as the studios began to realize that the way forward was to position film as the central focus of a multimedia business. Multinational multimedia corporations eventually came to dominate the industry (e.g. Time-Warner-AOL and News Corporation), effectively re-introducing vertical integration in a magnified form. Smaller supposedly independent filmmakers are now often in fact owned by multinationals, e.g. Miramax (Disney) and New Line (Time-Warner). What the industry utilizes now is a special form of business energy known as synergy.
- The American presence around the world as an imperial power, particularly after the Second World War, has given additional access to global markets (e.g. Germany

and Japan). At the same time American companies have become multinational companies in a process that has gone on alongside the globalization of American-English as a first international business language, further assisting market penetration. Finally the level of financial resources available to these massive corporations also of course crucially means that they are able to absorb greater levels of risk than smaller companies and therefore have inevitably achieved business longevity.

EXAMPLE EXAM QUESTIONS

1 What are some of the differences and/or similarities between Hollywood film production now compared with the 1930s and 1940s?

2 What part has Hollywood had to play in any recent increases in cinema box office takings in Britain?

CONCLUSION

In order to study film it is important:

- to have some awareness of the historical development of the film industry in Hollywood;
- to be able to compare Old Hollywood with New Hollywood, that is former processes used in Hollywood with more contemporary processes.

The key to understanding Hollywood as a whole is:

- to realize that filmmaking in Hollywood has always been seen as a commercial process;
- to recognize that for every part of the commercial process today there is likely to have been some similar element in the past.

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USEFUL WEBSITE

www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk

10 IS THE BRITISH FILM INDUSTRY IN ANY WAY DISTINCTIVE AND DIFFERENT? HOW DOES IT COPE WITH HAVING TO SURVIVE IN THE SHADOW OF HOLLYWOOD?

In this chapter we look at:

- what is distinctive and different about the British film industry;
- what the government and the Film Council are doing to support the British film industry;
- what the current state of the industry is in relation to the world market, and what the future looks like for the British film industry.

The British film industry controls a powerful medium that tells British stories, and shapes how the British see themselves, how the world sees them, and how they see the world. It offers reflections on, and explorations of British life (and the lives of other nations from a British perspective), and adds to a sense and construction of a national identity.

British film serves many diverse cultural purposes, engaging British society with issues that impact on their lives and the lives of those with whom they may not have direct contact, but they nevertheless share common ground within that society. It reflects the make up of society, offering representations of self and others, and thus plays an important role in defining social debate, and relationships between groups within society. In reflecting society it has an equally important role in enriching the viewer, by exposing the range of cultural experiences available within their own society. In recent years British film has become confident in expanding its range to include a wider cross-section of ethnic groupings, gender groupings, and cultural groupings and as such is promoting the diversity of regional identities and from this diversity is offering a more representative and inclusive national identity.

NOTEBOX . . .

Three billion people (approximately half of the world's population) have seen a James Bond film. James Bond is, of course a British brand, with films made by British technicians and artists, starring British actors, shot (more often than not) in British studios, and produced by a British company.

The same British studios, production companies, artists, actors and technicians were behind the worldwide successes of films such as *The Full Monty* (TCF/Redwave 1997, Director: Peter Cattaneo), *Gosford Park* (Entertainment/Capitol/Film Council/Sandcastle 5/Chicagofilms/Medusa 2001, Director: Robert Altman), and *Love Actually* (Universal/Working Title/DNA 2003, Director: Richard Curtis), with millions more enjoying these British films across the surface of the globe.

A DISTINCTIVE AND DIFFERENT CINEMA

In her paper 'Government and the Value of Culture', Tessa Jowell, Minister for Culture and the Arts, made no mention of film as a significant medium of culture, and in doing so indicated that she does not perceive film as being in the same kind of cultural arena as other art forms (theatre for example). Perhaps this is due to British cinema being a victim of its own success, with increasing numbers of indigenous films being produced and cinema-going reaching record levels (or at least levels not seen since the 1940s). UK cinema admissions are currently on an upward trend seeing them increasing on average between 8 per cent and 12 per cent each year for the past four years. With in excess of 180 million tickets sold (a figure that was inconceivable 20 years ago), much of the credit should go to the cinemas themselves as they have inwardly invested significant proportions of their profits to improve the cinema-going experience. If government sees a successful, thriving economy generated by British film then it is likely to be blinded to its artistic and cultural significance, concentrating instead on other cultural arenas that do not see such high audiences, nor levels of economic success.

What the government does not see from admissions figures is that approximately 80 per cent of UK box office comes out of mainstream films distributed by American distributors and that in comparison with other EU countries Britain is exposed to a limited range of films, with American product squeezing out indigenous exhibition.

Other than the product that a British film delivers (in artistic terms of story), which is often centred around British 'themes' and values, the 'little Englander', or the Englishman abroad, and may well be classed as a 'heritage film', it is the structure of the industry here that makes it distinctive and different, and which is both a boon and problem to its success.

In America the film industry has realized (a long time ago) that it is in international distribution where the serious money is to be earned (up to 80 per cent of a film's profit can come through this source), and so they invest heavily in this end of the market.

Retaining the distribution rights to their films also means that these films continue to offer potential profits for many years into the future, thus ensuring a continuity of cash flow. Additional profit can be re-invested in the creation of product, and as such distribution successfully 'pulls' production.

The British market however has evolved from a historic position of being production led, with entrepreneurial producers determinedly 'pushing' their films through to completion and distribution. This distribution is almost invariably through an American company, and in order to complete the film the producer may have agreed a disadvantageous pre-sale of the distribution rights (cinema, DVD/video, pay per view, satellite TV, terrestrial broadcasting, alternative platforms, etc.), meaning that any money made is not likely to be reinvested in British production, being instead diverted overseas.

The British film industry has been compared to a 'cottage industry' when seen in relation to the industrialized American model, and this, coupled with its inability to deliver a production line of products and in doing so mitigate risk by having a large enough slate of films to ensure failures do not have such a devastating effect, appears as a disincentive to potential investors. Integrated support from the broadcasting industry is deceptive as it appears to play a significant role, yet the BBC spends approximately 1 per cent of its revenue on filmmaking, while the other broadcasters (with the notable exception of Channel 4) spend even less per year.

This cottage industry is also reflected in production where many companies are established to produce just one film, and may well disappear after its completion (whether successful or not) resulting in an industry that is continually reinventing itself, and never establishing the fixed financial structures, systems, and infrastructures that can be utilized and exploited continually into the future. With 95 per cent of production companies in Britain employing fewer than ten people, it is no surprise that they are unable to compete with American, or indeed other, national cinemas. Forty-three domestic British films were produced in Britain in 2003 and 27 in 2004 (there were only two made in 1982 however), whereas by comparison Bollywood's output is approaching 1,000 per year. With limited distribution, these British films did not fare well at the box office either in Britain or internationally, with the most successful production of 2004 in terms of box office receipts being *Shaun of the Dead* (Big Talk/Studio Canal/WT2/Working Title 2004, Director: Edgar Wright), the comedy zombie movie spoof. Worldwide demand for film has exceeded all records, with growing audiences and growing diversity of exhibition platforms to meet that demand. The British film industry however has not been in a position to successfully and vigorously respond to this demand and (since in 1984 it was celebrating its ability to produce 20 features) currently appears to be sinking back to a position it was in over 20 years ago.

This is in clear contrast to the American model where the film industry has diversified to strengthen and develop links with other media and other delivery platforms, and in doing so have created vast media empires, conglomerates that maximize the profit from a single film through owning and controlling the rights to every element in it. Thus even a weak film will eventually come into profit without damaging the parent company.

Figure 10.1 *The Constant Gardener – a British co-production*
Source: Focus Features / The Kobal Collection / Buitendijk, Jaap

However, it did produce such cinematic gems as E*nduring Love* (Film Four/Film Council/Pathé/Free Range/Inside Track/Ridgeway 2004, Director: Roger Michell) and B*ullet Boy* (BBC/Film Council/Shine 2004, Director: Saul Dibb) in the same year, both of which exceeded their box office expectations considerably. Each was connected solidly with contemporary city life and each reflected the landscape and architecture of London as a vibrant, diverse, multicultural melting-pot, updating the stereotype and rewriting London and indeed Britain once more. Both presented a London that was known and real to the British audience, and, as such, this may have prefaced their respective successes.

ACTIVITY . . .

Discussion point

If Britain cannot compete on the world stage, and retiring to a 'cottage industry' style of production is not moving the film industry forward, what approach should British film take? Consider developments in production, distribution, and exhibition.

What measures could the British government take to ensure 'distinctive and different' is compatible with financially successful?

SURVIVING IN THE SHADOWS

The picture is not all negative however. The amount of international awards that British filmmakers have won (particularly in the last 20 years) is notable and is significantly out of proportion to the size of the British film industry on the world stage. As Alan Parker noted in his 2002 presentation to the UK film industry entitled 'Building a Sustainable UK Film Industry':

> First. We have outstanding creative skills. We've got superb writers, directors and actors – not to mention the creators of hugely valuable intellectual properties like Harry Potter. Richard Curtis, for instance, has written British films which have grossed over a billion dollars at the world box office.
>
> Second. We have outstanding studios and facilities companies, world-class costumiers, camera companies and digital post-production houses – studios and facilities which have been a magnet for inward investment, principally from the US.
>
> Third. We still have – just about – the finest technicians and craftspeople anywhere – although their numbers are diminishing at a worrying rate.
>
> I could also add a fourth: we have the English language – not just the same language of American movies, but that of the Internet.

In fact, in terms of the rest of the world, the British film industry is in good shape and is seen as one of the most dynamic in the world. With the global market for film estimated at $63bn in 2002 – and the American industry taking an 80 per cent share of this global market – the British film industry's took 5 per cent, a figure that may superficially seem low when compared with the 80 per cent American share, but when compared with the rest of the world it means that Britain has 25 per cent of the non-American share, a healthy figure by any standards. Britain is now in fact the world's third largest film market against revenue (after America and Japan).

The British government has been fundamental in creating the conditions for this success, and one particular piece of tax law – the Section 42 tax break (which offers producers about 10 per cent of their budget back in the form of a tax break, and which makes Britain a very attractive place in which to shoot a film) has proved incredibly useful in attracting filmmakers to British shores in the face of stiff competition from Eastern Europe, South Africa, Canada, and New Zealand, and has promoted Britain as a destination that is high on the priority lists of many of the world's filmmakers.

Distribution is changing with the Film Council taking determined measures to develop and support indigenous distribution companies that can compete on the world stage. Distribution is currently controlled by America through a number of powerful

distribution companies, who prefer their own and other American product above British releases, creating the situation where British films find it hard to reach their audiences. The American-owned Buena Vista, which distributes Disney and Miramax films, has the largest share of the British distribution market, with another American company UIP following hot on its heels. With players of this size and strength dividing up the market between them it is perhaps surprising that running a reasonably close third is an independent British owned company Entertainment, who have brought a remarkable slate of successful films on to the market and have had considerable commercial success.

The Film Council is also looking at ways of improving the balance in ownership of Britain's cinemas, and is already piloting a number of schemes designed to offer support to the great number of independent cinemas that dot the country. The landscape has changed for the major players also in recent years with cinema chains being acquired by venture capitalists who see them as reliable investments.

The Odeon and UCI chains were bought by a venture capitalist group, Terra Firma, in August 2004, and the Warner Village chain was purchased and re-branded by Vue (another venture capitalist group) in May 2003. The American Blackstone Group bought both Cine UK and the UGC chains at the end of 2004, which means that in terms of British exhibition, the American production conglomerates now own very little. With the advent of digital acquisition, distribution, and exhibition in cinemas, which is being advocated and supported by the Film Council, it is possible that controlling interests in British cinemas could return to British industrial control for the first time in over 50 years.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Look at the strengths outlined by Alan Parker (above). Which do you feel is the most important to maintain? What other strengths would you add to this list?
- The market for exhibition is changing rapidly. Find out who owns your local cinemas. Are they independent or part of a chain? What are the practical differences? List the advantages and disadvantages of each – which one comes off best?
- Visit the Film Council website and look at the papers there on digital futures. In a group, discuss the potential that digital distribution and exhibition offers the British Film Industry. Do you think it will impact on broadcasting? What overall effect do you think it will have on the British film industry?
- How well do you think the British film industry is surviving in the shadow of Hollywood? What can it do to ensure this survival continues?

USEFUL WEBSITES

http://www.filmcouncil.org

http://www.skillset.org/film

11 NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND THE FILM INDUSTRY

This chapter deals with:

- the historically ongoing and continually developing relationship between film and new technologies;
- ways in which new technologies have affected the consumers' experience of film;
- what opportunities new technologies have offered the producers of films;
- an overview of the relationship between new technologies and the cinema experience.

NOTEBOX . . .

This chapter will be directly relevant to FS2 – Producers and Audiences for the WJEC's AS Level in Film Studies. (Considered in conjunction with work on 'The dominance of Hollywood' and 'Fandom' in the A2 companion book on Film Studies, this will also be relevant to the final exam at the end of the full A Level, 'FS6 – Critical Studies'.)

ACTIVITY . . .

- Undertake a survey amongst as many people as possible to investigate their use of modern film-related technologies. Try to bracket your responses into groups according to age and sex. You should put together your own carefully thought out questionnaire but aim to find out the answers to the following sorts of questions:
  - How many have access to satellite or cable TV and how many subscribe to the film channels? How many satellite or cable TV films do they watch in a week? How many pay-to-view films do they watch in a week?

continued

- How many have a DVD player? How extensive is their DVD film collection? How many DVD films do they watch on average in a week?
- How many use the Internet to download films? How many use the Internet to read film reviews or other film-related material?
- How many have digital cameras? How many have or have used a film editing software package?

(Remember to modify these questions and add to them as you see fit: this is an important part of the exercise since it is asking you to think for yourself and that is the key skill above all others that you should be aiming to cultivate.)

- Display the results of your survey using a series of graphs of whatever type you believe best show the information.
- Write a short report (600–800 words) explaining what your survey shows about modern-day usage of film-related technologies.

Facts in focus

- 153 million VHS videos and DVDs were rented, while 234 million VHS videos and DVDs were sold.
- DVD sales increased 35% on 2003.
- The total value of the rental and sales market in 2004 was £3.1 billion, up 9% on 2003.
- The top rental title on VHS and DVD was *Love Actually*. The most popular purchase on VHS was *Finding Nemo*, and on DVD it was *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*.
- 9.48 million DVD players and 3.7 million video cassette recorders were sold in 2004.
- Over 60% of households now own a DVD player compared to only 45% in 2003.

Figure 11.1 *Facts in focus*
Source: Chapter 10 of the UK Film Council Statistical Yearbook, 2004. Reproduced with permission of the UK Film Council

FILM AND TECHNOLOGY

Behind any discussion regarding exactly how we are going to define the 'film' in Film Studies, there must be the question of technology: without the necessary technology film is impossible to make and impossible to watch, it is a form of expression that is intimately related to technology. Mainstream films are so closely connected to an industrial process that it is perhaps difficult for some people to consider film as a form of artistic expression. Everything we have been investigating in this part of this book

would be leading us to see film as a commercial product rather than anything else. Indeed, one of the most interesting aspects of Film Studies is the way in which we are driven to see film texts as both creative works and profit-driven enterprises.

As a student of 'film' at least part of your studies must involve the need to consider in some detail the relationship of the film industry to new and changing technologies. In the process we should remember above all that this is not a new relationship but one that goes back to the early days of cinema. Cinema itself was clearly a stunning new technology in the late 1890s and early 1900s: when the Lumière brothers, for example, set up their first screenings of 'actualities' in a basement in Paris in 1895, people were fascinated by the representations of life in moving images offered by this new technology.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Take a recent Hollywood film that you have on DVD and watch a few scenes you know reasonably well with the TV adjusted to show black and white images.
- How does this change the experience? Does it feel strange? Can you imagine a world with only black and white television, where the only place you could see colour images would be at the cinema? Ask any older people you might know if they can remember this period before 1970 in Britain.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Find a copy of a short silent film from the early period of filmmaking. It will probably come with a musical soundtrack which may well not have been originally written to accompany the film. Turn this down and, if possible, find someone who is a skilled musician (and hopefully is also studying film) to provide a live accompaniment to the film.
- Watch the film in this way with a group of other people. As you are doing so, try to imagine the experience of early cinema audiences. Make sure you find time to discuss the experience afterwards.

The key thing to notice as you undertake research into the relationship between film and new technologies is the way in which these new technologies are rarely adopted immediately they become available. Every new technology involves a (usually large) set-up cost for the industry. Therefore, if the new technology is to be adopted, either sizeable profits have to be seen as virtually guaranteed or the industry has to feel itself to be under such threat from an outside force that adopting the new technology is seen as the only way to maintain cinema's current share of the leisure market. Colour and widescreen technologies, for example, were available well before the 1950s but were

not widely adopted until the advent of TV meant that cinema audiences were in steep decline and some additional attraction was seen as needed to woo the public back to the darkened auditorium experience. The first colour film is often said to be *Becky Sharp* (Mamoulien, 1935) but there were colour processes being used as early as the silent period, using labour-intensive hand painting of individual prints for example. However, why would you spend money on expensive colour possibilities if the public was continuing to pay good money to come to a black and white experience and there was no competitive edge to be gained by the change to a new technology?

ACTIVITY . . .

- Watch extracts from *Man With a Movie Camera* (Vertov, 1929) (see FS5 World Cinema – Soviet and German Cinema of the 1920s) and then discuss with others what this film has to say about filmmaking and cinema-going in the early 1900s.
- In this film you will see centre stage being given over to the film camera itself. You will also see the cameraman and the editor at work, and have several glimpses of audiences in a cinema auditorium. The film was made in Russia under very particular circumstances and by filmmakers interested in the avant garde possibilities of the medium but nevertheless it does give some insight into how film technology was viewed and used in the period.

FILM AND CHANGES IN TECHNOLOGY

The film industry has always used new technologies relating to the making and showing of films (although crucially, as already mentioned, this has not always occurred as soon as the technologies have become available). A brief list of crucial technological moments in the history of cinema would include:

- the projection of moving images to create the original silent films in makeshift cinemas in the late 1890s;
- commercially unsuccessful attempts to introduce colour processes and synchronized sound within a few years of the first screenings in the early 1900s;
- the financially successful introduction of sound (the 'talkies') in the late 1920s/early 1930s which led to massive changes in the industry;
- the widespread adoption of colour and widescreen in the 1950s in an effort to combat the competition from television caused by the mass production of TV sets, changing leisure patterns, and the movement of much of the population out to newly built suburbs after the war;
- the gimmicky ultimately unsuccessful efforts to offer the public three-dimensional film in the same period again in an effort to offer the public something different from television;
- the increasing use of television from the 1960s as a medium for showing films with the accompanying realization that in this way old films could effectively be recycled or re-sold;

- the advent of VHS rental and recording from the 1970s opening up the possibility of again re-selling old films but also effectively re-releasing relatively new films to a new 'window' after a period at the cinema;
- the introduction of satellite and cable channels from the 1980s which again offered a further 'window' for both old and relatively recent films (main package channels, premium subscription channels and pay-to-view channels of course effectively further sub-divided this 'window');
- the increased marketing of the 'home cinema concept' from the 1990s so that with technology allowing larger screens and surround sound something approaching an analogous experience becomes possible;
- the limited use of IMAX and other large screen formats from the 1990s which because they would cost the industry so much to introduce on a wide scale have never so far been used to offer anything more than the occasional theme park-style experience;
- the move to DVD technology from the late 1990s which with the use of 'extras' and an enhanced experience encouraged consumers to replace their old video film library with the latest disc format;
- the increased use of the Internet from the late 1990s, for marketing initially but also increasingly for downloading films;
- the advent from around 2000 of digital filmmaking and digital projection facilities in cinemas.

Each of these moments of technological change for the industry is essentially concerned with the viewing experience but it is also true of course that there has been a parallel series of technological changes in the making of films. For example, when sound is successfully integrated into film then the cameras have to become silent in order that their mechanical noises are not picked up and obviously sound technology has to develop quickly in order to enable voices to be picked up clearly; in fact a whole new field of production and creativity opens up. And perhaps we have currently reached a similar turning point because the big question now is what impact new digital possibilities for filmmaking and exhibition are going to have on the industry.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Working with others if possible, research the current development of digital filmmaking and projection. Find out only in very broad terms how the new technology works but make sure you obtain some estimates as to how costs compare with old methods.
- Try to form a clear picture of the advantages of the new digital technology but also an idea of obstacles in the way of introducing full-scale change.

(The key factor to bear in mind is the cost of replacing/discarding old cameras, editing equipment and projection facilities that are currently in use.)

ACTIVITY . . .

- If possible work with others to try to research the early years of the film industry. Clearly you are expected to focus on Hollywood and Britain, but do not neglect to look at the rest of Europe and do make some effort to find out about film in other countries from around the world. It would be a useful practical approach to allocate various areas of research to different people. Try to find out about the earliest screenings in as many countries as possible.
- If you are working with others, present your information to the whole group giving them a short one-page handout at the end summing up your main points. Try to illustrate your points by showing visuals from books or short film clips, if possible.

New technologies and the consumer

New technologies might be said to offer consumers:

- an improved overall qualitative experience as a result of better sound and/or image reproduction;
- a heightened emotional experience as a result of a stronger sense of empathy with characters who in some sense seem more real;
- enhanced spectacle perhaps through the sheer overpowering size of the screen or the impact on the senses of a surrounding wall of sound;
- improved ease of access, or ease of use, for instance through enabling people to own their own film collections in various formats;
- new, easier and intensified ways of using film to pleasure themselves, for example IMAX would seem to offer an intense 'fairground ride' for the senses;
- an enhanced intellectual experience through the provision of increased knowledge or understanding, for instance through the use of commentaries by directors on DVDs;
- the chance to use new, ever cheaper and more compact devices to make films for themselves.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Try to add to the above list, if possible by discussing the idea of new technologies and the consumer with others. You might even want to cross ideas off the list given here if you do not agree with them (for example, the second point seems at least worth debating carefully).
- Apply each of these ideas to the various new technologies so far mentioned in this chapter. What will each new technology offer the consumer? You should consider sound, colour, widescreen, surround sound, TV, VHS, satellite and cable, DVD including 'extras', home cinema, the Internet and any other technologies you think are important.

New technologies and the film industry

New technologies offer the industry:

- the possibility of an improved opportunity to create profits (the costs or required expenditure involved in bringing in the new technology will be carefully balanced against the projected additional income before any new technology is introduced);
- a way to protect current market share in the face of new potential competitors (in this case the costs will be set against the potential loss of income arising if the new technology is not adopted);
- the chance to re-package and re-sell old products especially cult and 'classic' movies thereby establishing a new audience base, or even fan base, for an old product (notice that this is even true of an older technological change like the move to sound);
- an opportunity to place products for sale in new 'windows' thereby lengthening the commercial life of each film (a film can now be sold to consumers via the cinema, satellite and cable TV, DVD, and terrestrial TV);
- the chance to encourage multiple purchases of essentially the same product (so any one consumer might pay to see a film in the cinema, then later pay to watch the same film on pay-to-view, before later still buying her own copy on DVD);
- a means of still managing to make a profit or break even on films that initially perform poorly or below expectations at the box office (such products can be re-packaged, re-marketed and re-sold through a succession of 'windows');
- overall, enhanced production, distribution and exhibition possibilities.

Facts in focus

- 2,237 films were shown on terrestrial channels in 2004, down 4% on 2003. This is an average of just over six films per day. Of these 509 (23%) were UK films, and 60 (2.7%) were foreign language films.
- An average of 2.3 million people watched each film on peak time TV (down from 2.8 million in 2003), compared to median audiences for the top 50 films at the cinema of 1.9 million.
- The top film on terrestrial television was *Shrek* on BBC1, with 9.5 million viewers.
- Multi-channel television accounted for over 26% of the UK television audience in 2004, up from 24% in 2003.

Figure 11.2 *Facts in focus*
Source: Chapter 11 of the UK Film Council Statistical Yearbook, 2004. Reproduced with permission of the UK Film Council

ACTIVITY . . .

- Try to add to the above list, if possible by discussing the idea of new technologies and the film industry with others.
- Then see how many of the ideas from your list can be applied to each of the various new technologies so far mentioned in this chapter. What has each new technology offered the industry? Why has the industry (and essentially we are talking about Hollywood here) decided to introduce each new technology at its particular chosen historical moment? You should consider sound, colour, widescreen, surround sound, terrestrial TV, VHS, satellite and cable TV, DVD, home cinema, the Internet and any other technologies you think are important.
- This may involve considerable research. Try to work in groups with each person taking one area to work on. Then, present your findings to the rest of the group supplying everyone with a one-page handout summarizing your research.

New technologies and the cinema experience

It could be argued that new technologies have always added to, rather than detracted from, the cinema experience. The size and/or quality of the spectacle have been enhanced by each new development adding to the unique nature of the cinematic 'event' (even the advent of TV in a sense only highlights the difference and in particular the spectacle of the cinema experience).

The experience of the cinema itself cannot be easily replicated or replaced but the alternative experiences of pay-TV, or home cinema, have their own attractions particularly in terms of flexibility of viewing. The advent of TV and changed leisure patterns ended the social dominance of the cinema as a source of entertainment and information (remember this was once the only place you could see visual images of news events). The cinema experience has made something of a comeback although attendance is never going to match the heights attained in 1946 in both the US and Britain.

As with studying the content of the films themselves, what we find is that the industry and its technological base always have to be seen within social, economic, political and historical contexts. Towards the end of the Second World War and just after, cinema attendance peaked, as without the presence of TV sets in the home, people sought news images and perhaps some sort of collective, community-enhancing escape. The nature of cinema attendance at this moment was determined by the nature of the historical moment, and this is always the case. Our job is to try to understand how changes and developments within the film industry might be connected to the contexts of the period in which they take place.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Find out how levels of cinema attendance in the US and Britain have changed from 1940 to today. Try to find a graph showing these changes or plot your own graph from the figures you have obtained.
- Compare your graph to those completed by other people. Hopefully they will be at least roughly similar. If not, discuss any differences. Are there differences in the figures used, if so why? (Or has anyone made a mistake in the plotting!)
- Discuss in as much detail as possible how the various ups and downs, peaks and plateaus of the graph might reflect technological change.

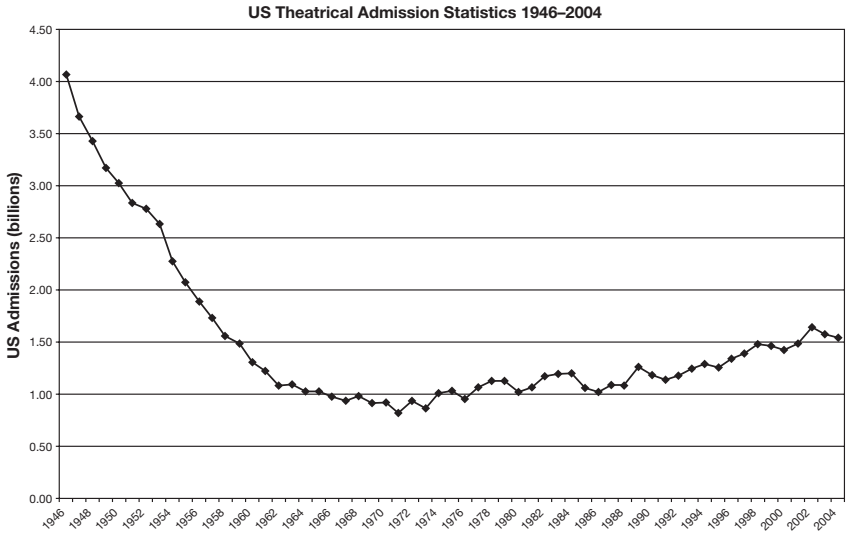

Figure 11.3 *US theatrical admission statistics 1946–2004*
Source: Reproduced with permission of Motion Picture Association of America Worldwide Research

New technologies: an afterthought

We have given some initial consideration to the importance of new technologies to the film industry but we may be able to take those thoughts a little further. Some theoretical approaches that claim to give an insight into understanding society would see the development of new technologies as fundamental in determining the shape of society. Technological determinism not only assumes progress is inevitable but also suggests it is technological development that essentially shapes society.

KEY TERM

TECHNOLOGICAL DETERMINISM The assumption that technological progress is inevitable and determines the shape and nature of social change.

Supporters of the Internet suggest that this form of communication marks a new era of democratization and freedom of choice empowering ordinary people to produce and receive information and entertainment from all over the world. Others, such as some Marxist critics, might suggest that this development, by isolating consumers from face-to-face human interaction, enables them to be more tightly controlled and manipulated. Other critics note the increased access to pornography and extreme right-wing propaganda available on the Internet, or point to an increasing gap between information-rich populations and information-poor populations (less than one in a thousand black South Africans, for example, own a phone).

ACTIVITY . . .

- How do you see the Internet? Is it a positive or negative development?
- Draw up a list of ways in which it could be considered to be (a) positive and (b) negative.
- In groups compare your ideas with each other.
- What does all of this have to do with Film Studies? Discuss this in your groups and then as a whole class.

ACTIVITY . . .

Undertake further research if necessary, and then write an essay (1,000–1,500 words) on the continually evolving relationship between the film industry and new technologies. You should aim to consider the introduction of sound, colour and widescreen to cinemas as well as more recent technologies.

CONCLUSION

New technologies:

- have always been of vital importance to the film industry;
- have only ever been adopted when the industry has been sure of their commercial importance.

FURTHER READING

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PART 3
MESSAGES AND VALUES – BRITISH AND IRISH CINEMA (FS3)

12 INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FILMS AND THE EVERYDAY WORLD?

In this section we look at:

- how messages and values are expressed in film;
- how meaning is made by spectators in response to specific films;
- how films offer representations of their subjects, and how these representations are interpreted;
- how filmmakers can 'position' an audience to respond to representations, messages, and values.

Films offer filmmakers the opportunity to express their own messages and values, and reflect the messages and values of the societies they inhabit. Similarly audiences watch films and understand the messages and values on screen through the filter of their own values and beliefs.

KEY TERM

MESSAGES Messages are deliberately placed communications in a film that are intended to be read, or de-coded by an audience, and which should then affect the spectator's individual understanding of the film. A message may be explicitly expressed (perhaps by having a character spell it out) or may be implicitly expressed and in need of interpretation (in *Get Carter* (MGM/Mike Klinger 1971, Director: Mike Hodges) for instance, the women in the film are all victims, and receive summary punishment at the hands of men – is this a 'hidden' message from the director?).

Explicit messages are normally straightforward with little opportunity for misinterpretation. Implicit messages are more complex and their understanding is reliant not only on how they have been 'coded' into the film, but also on the spectator's own experiences and belief system.

KEY TERM

VALUES Values are an expression of what an individual or a society considers important, in terms of social behaviour, laws, attitudes, beliefs, etc. Values are of course both changeable and relative to each other and situations where they are applied.

Systems or sets of values can be expressed as an *ideology* (a belief system), which, again, can be an individual ideology or an ideology defined by a society.

It is perfectly possible for an individual to hold their own set of values within a broader set of values belonging to a society. Thus someone could accept the broad values of a democracy whilst being a tyrant in their own home.

Unit FS3 explores the messages and values within British cinema and to do this effective skills need to be developed in:

- being able to identify and understand explicit or implicit messages and values both from a contemporary perspective and by considering how an audience at a particular time would have perceived these messages and values;
- being able to contextualize films in terms of when they were made, in what production context, and for what specific audience(s);
- being able to analyse films critically and extract relevant information, and able to understand that the information is not fixed, but is seen by one person from one perspective: it is vital to develop an understanding that meaning is negotiated from a film by a spectator who brings with them filters and barriers through which information has to first pass;
- being able to reflect critically on a personal response to a film's messages and values, and understand that this response is constructed not only by the film, but also by the experiences, temperament, mood, and inclination of the viewer;
- understanding that there are many 'correct' responses to messages and values in a film, and that these may not be shared between individual viewers;
- understanding that filmmakers will try to position an audience into a narrow range of responses (a 'preferred reading') in order to control the construction of meaning.

These skills take time to develop and develop in people at different rates. It is important to note that there are no 'wrong' responses to messages and values expressed by a film, merely differences of opinion. What is important is the skill of expressing this opinion and of finding the best language to support an argument. Learning from Units FS1 and FS2 can readily be brought in to the study of this unit to aid the development of informed opinions and their expression.

KEY TERM

REPRESENTATION Representation is the re-presentation or interpretation of an image, an action, a conversation, etc. As it re-presents the original from the

perspective of the person (screenwriter, director, cinematographer, etc.) constructing the representation, it can never accurately capture the original, but will instead offer a partial view, coloured by messages and values.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Collect together some photographs of yourself. Give them to a friend who has no knowledge of the circumstances in which they were taken, and ask them to look carefully at each photograph, then write down what they understand is happening. At the same time, write down what you recall of the events captured by the photograph.
- Compare notes. How accurate is your friend's view of what is happening in each photo? Have they missed things out that you see as obvious? Have you included information from memory of the actual event that is not possible to extract from the photographic representation of the event?
- Try conducting the same experiment with someone who knows you little. Do they construct the same view of the events in the photos as your friend? If not, why do you think they are different?

Messages and values are represented in a single film, and are built on and challenged or reinforced by the messages and values represented in other films within the same or similar groupings (such as 'Swinging Britain', and 'Passions and repressions'). Aspects of everyday life are represented in film, and may conform to an understanding of how these aspects usually appear, or may challenge this understanding. What is important is that representations are not simply accepted as being the way things are, but are considered either as symptoms of a society's attitudes and values, and/or as deliberate constructs designed to achieve a desired outcome, and positioning the spectator into accepting the messages and values being expressed.

The relationship between films and the everyday world is one in which representations are constructed and messages and values are placed within the film to be extracted, explored, considered, and compared with the representations our own 'real life' experience offers us. It is at this point that meaning is developed, or negotiated from a film, and it is in this context of a meeting point between the real and the unreal that concepts of pleasure and of beliefs are introduced.

In order to explore messages and values in this unit, students are asked to undertake a comparative study in representation (class, gender, race, sexuality, national or regional identity, social or political institutions, etc.) and in the social and historical context in which particular films were produced. The study will be contained within one of these areas:

- The 1940s – the war and its aftermath
- Swinging Britain 1963–1973
- Passions and repressions
- Social and political conflict
- Scottish cinema
- Comedy

To complement this study a close study of a single film's messages and values is also required, focusing on close textual study and/or study of the film's social and historical production context.

Without understanding how meaning is produced and messages and values are conveyed (either through the study of a single film or through the study of a group of films) then film remains separated from the everyday world, a world that provides points of reference, experience, and a context for the film to be placed against, and which itself may be explained a little as it helps explain a film. Messages and values are at the heart of film, and are at the heart of societies from which they come, and so with a pre-existing relationship, placing both film and the wider world at the centre of study would seem to be the only logical approach to making sense of both.

13 THE 1940s: THE WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH

In this chapter we look at:

- the content and contexts of the focus films;
- the key issues which underpin the study of the films of this period;
- the wider historical and production context of filmmaking in this period.

Focus films:	*In Which We Serve* (Rank/Two Cities 1942, Director: Noel Coward/David Lean)
	Passport to Pimlico (Ealing 1949, Director: Henry Cornelius)
Suggested comparison films:	*Millions Like Us* (GFD/Gainsborough 1943, Director: Frank Launder/ Sidney Gilliat)
	The Way to the Stars (Two Cities 1945, Director: Anthony Asquith)

This topic area focuses not only on the films made by British filmmakers and British studios during the Second World War (controlled and shaped by the British government through the Ministry of Information), but also on those films made in the immediate postwar period (up to the end of the 1940s) which reflected on the wartime experience and on 'the peace'. This exciting and vibrant period of British filmmaking reflects a number of issues that can be studied in terms of messages and values including:

- national identity – how the diversity of the British as a nation is portrayed as a unifying strength;
- class, rank, and gender representation – how groups within society are depicted during and after the war;

- social and political institutions – how the war is seen to affect family life, and how the authorities (from bank managers to senior government and military figures) are seen to react;
- propaganda and the historical context – films made to strengthen a nation under attack, and films made by the victors in the aftermath (and among the ruins) of war;
- production context – the films of this period in relation to a broader context of British film (both fiction and non-fiction), and the context of key filmmakers/studios.

IN WHICH WE SERVE – SUMMARY

In Which We Serve was co-written, produced, and directed by the theatrical genius Noel Coward, and a young filmmaker David Lean. The film was commissioned as a propaganda piece at a time when the tide of war had not yet turned in Britain's favour, but when there were signs of hope emerging. Britain was waging an unparalleled war at sea with many thousands of Royal Navy and Merchant Navy seamen being lost in the Atlantic convoys, the Baltic convoys, and in the Mediterranean, as island Britain

Figure 13.1 *In Which We Serve*
Source: British Film Institute

received goods from the West to support the war effort, and sent goods to the East to bolster a 'second front'.

Based on the experiences of Lord Louis Mountbatten (later Earl Mountbatten of Burma) whose ship HMS *Kelly* was sunk under him, *In Which We Serve*'s lead character Captain Kinross was played by the co-director Noel Coward. The Ministry of Information was not keen on seeing Noel Coward take this role due to his reputation both as darling of an elite 'café society' but also due to his having played upper-class characters in light comedy on stage and thus being perceived as 'wrong' to represent a heroic fighting man (particularly a character based on a member of the royal family).

The film tells the story of a Royal Navy destroyer (HMS *Torrin*) and of her crew, told in flashback after the ship is torpedoed and sunk, and the survivors suffer perilous conditions on a life raft. It begins and ends with documentary-like footage of ships being built, launched, and fitted out, and of ships' companies assembling and working. This footage is thrown into sharp relief by the image of the survivors struggling in the aftermath of HMS *Torrin*'s sinking during the Battle for Crete and the succeeding flashbacks from crew-members who reflect diversity of age and class. The flashbacks allow the spectator to engage with both civilian and military life as the sailors are knitted together under Captain Kinross, as they are shown returning on leave to the 'home front', as three Christmas scenes are juxtaposed, as the impact of their war on their families and loved ones is depicted, and as the events of battle are given screen time.

Not only does the film deal with the crew's reaction to the harsh reality of war, but it allows the spectator to gain a new perspective on these fighting men in revealing their home lives, family relationships, and friendships, and how they deal with the difficulties that war wages on these aspects. The Ministry of Information were uncertain of the depiction of Chief Petty Officer Hardy's (Bernard Miles) wife and mother-in-law being killed in an air raid (an everyday event for many servicemen, but one that could affect morale if portrayed on film), but his reaction and determination to continue the 'good' fight convinced them of the value of this scene. It was scenes such as these that marked this film out as more than just a propaganda piece.

PASSPORT TO PIMLICO – SUMMARY

Passport to Pimlico was made by Ealing Studios, who, after their wartime effort of producing morale-boosting comedy with films like *The Foreman Went to France* (1941, Director: Alberto Cavalcanti) and stirring propaganda pieces such as *Went the Day Well?* (1943, Director: Alberto Cavalcanti), had already turned their attention to the postwar period with films such as *Hue and Cry* (1946, Director: Charles Crichton). The end of the Second World War heralded a period of great political and social change with returning servicemen and those who had served on the home front determined to rebuild Britain as a 'land fit for heroes'.

A postwar Labour government was voted into power with a landslide majority and began a programme of social change that established many of the institutions underpinning today's society, such as the National Health Service, and the Welfare

State. However, on the ground the privations of war continued, with vast tracts of cities such as London laid waste by Nazi bombing remaining as bomb sites. Rationing (where 'luxury' items such as fuel, chocolate, silks, and even bananas could only be purchased by saving up ration coupons) was still in place, and the black market (the illegal trade in goods – largely rationed goods, but often simply stolen or 'liberated' from bomb sites) was affecting all levels of society.

Henry Cornelius uses this melting pot of social directions as the backdrop for his story of a small part of central London (Pimlico – bordered by Victoria railway station to the north and the Thames to the south) where an accidental discovery of ancient treasure on a bomb site leads to it declaring itself independent from Britain and part of the ancient kingdom of Burgundy. The innocence and expectation of this act is soon forgotten as opportunists and bureaucrats bring a harsh economic and political reality to the Burgundians in Pimlico.

When greengrocer Arthur Pemberton (Stanley Holloway) has his dreams of turning a local bomb site into a lido (an open-air swimming pool and leisure complex) for the people of Pimlico rejected by local council planners (they want to sell the site), his

Figure 13.2 *Scene from Passport to Pimlico*
Source: British Film Institute

peacetime world suddenly reflects the recent wartime one when an unexploded bomb on the site detonates to reveal (amongst the riches of uncovered buried treasure) a parchment decreeing the land around Miramount Place, Pimlico as belonging to the Duke of Burgundy. Innocent, middle-class Pemberton sees this simply as a means to bypass the council and get the lido built, but it soon becomes apparent that with Pimlico as a separate state the rule of British law is no longer relevant. Initially this is to the advantage of the people there who, in a spirit of unrestricted free enterprise, can buy what they like, can drink when they like, and can do what they like, but this advantage is short lived as suddenly and rapidly hordes of 'barrow boys' and 'spivs' descend on their peaceful area to sell 'off the ration' and illegal goods, both to locals and to queues of Londoners descending upon them.

A wartime unity of spirit is evoked as the locals have to face not only this immediate enemy but also one embodied by Whitehall, a British government determined to crush a tiny independent state that asserts its rights and stands up for its community values. It is interesting to see how Cornelius separates state and people: penned in and blockaded (water cut off and no food allowed across the border), the children of Pimlico are 'evacuated' and return to the border to throw food parcels across to their families – an act of kindness that is soon taken up by the ordinary British people.

Figure 13.3 *Scene from Passport to Pimlico*
Source: British Film Institute

The film's key message is encapsulated in its ending, where the British (and Burgundian) spirit of 'fair play', of community, and of cooperation is highlighted in a compromise as Pimlico rejoins the United Kingdom. The bureaucrats are defeated, and the people of Pimlico get their lido. The damage inflicted by the free-market (the criminals undercutting local prices with their illegal trade), the privations of independence (a worse rationing than that inflicted by the British ration card system), and the breakdown of social structures (families torn apart, law and order crumbling) are replaced by the lesser of evils (government-organized national rationing and restrictions) and the triumph of communal values over individual benefit.

NATIONAL IDENTITY

The significance of film as a tool for promoting a unified image of the United Kingdom was not lost on the wartime British government who (after an initial panic that meant the closure of cinemas in fear of mass casualties through bombing) took control of filmmaking through a newly created Ministry of Information (which had the power to veto a film or any aspect of a film from script, through budget, to actors, and editing decisions), placing regulations on production that ranged across both fiction and documentary.

National identity was an essential ingredient of British wartime productions and to a lesser extent those made in the immediate postwar period, and some underpinning principles defining this identity were described in a memorandum from the first Minister for Information, Lord Macmillan, as independent spirit, caring for the underdog, and resilience or 'backbone'. He also emphasized that the unifying strengths of British institutions such as policing by consent, and parliamentary democracy should be consistently contrasted with Nazi institutions such as the Führer and the Gestapo (the Nazi secret police).

Lord Macmillan saw that for a people engaged in 'total war', the British public would need to be reminded of what they were fighting for, and of what the unifying aspects of society were, across social, regional, and national borders. Under the direction of the Ministry of Information filmmakers began to construct a clear national identity that identified British strengths, linking them not only in opposition to the current enemy, but also to past victories. Historical epics such as *Henry* V (Rank/Two Cities1944, Director: Laurence Olivier), *Lady Hamilton* (Alexander Korda Films 1941, Director: Alexander Korda), and *The Young Mr Pitt* (TCF 1942, Director: Carol Reed), depicted British heroes (King Henry V, Vice-Admiral Lord Nelson, and Prime Minister William Pitt) all facing – and facing down – foreign enemies and the threat of European invaders. Each revises history to highlight the contemporary position of Britain's fight against the Nazis and each adds to the image of 'plucky little Britain' uniting in the face of a common enemy.

It was the Ministry of Information's view that filmmakers should join the war effort in creating a national cinema that would be part of the overall war effort, producing shorts and features, documentaries and dramas for a variety of uses and a variety of audiences.

Some British films of the period that are directly aimed at specific audiences beyond the 'home' audience include:

A *Canterbury Tale* (Rank/The Archers 1944; Directors: Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger) – released on the eve of the D-Day landings, this film has an American GI (soldier) as one of its central characters, who spends most of the film either literally or symbolically drawing parallels between Britain and America. It was directed at an American market prior to the invasion of Europe, an invasion that was predicted to (and did) cost many American lives.

Listen to Britain (The Crown Film Unit 1941; Director: Humphrey Jennings) – a documentary short depicting 'snapshots' of Britain at work, at play, and at war. Two versions were produced, one with an additional 'preface' which was targeted at the Canadian allies who were supplying Britain with a tremendous amount of goods and raw materials towards the war effort.

San Demetrio, London (Ealing 1943; Director: Charles Frend) – based on the true story of a merchant ship carrying American oil across the Atlantic, torpedoed, abandoned, and recovered by her crew: aimed at the American market to highlight the importance of their continued support.

The Goose Steps Out (Ealing, 1942; Directors: Will Hay and Basil Dearden) – a star vehicle for the popular comedian Will Hay, full of comedic impersonations of leading figures in (and stereotypes of) the Nazi leadership. Whilst the principal audience would have been the home market, films such as these were brought to the attention of 'the enemy' as tools of propaganda.

Each of these films offers specific messages and representations of values to targeted audiences for a definite and considered purpose.

Think about other films of this period that you have become aware of:

- What messages and values do they offer?
- How are these depicted on screen?
- What character types are employed and in what roles?
- Is there more than one audience for these films?

Through images of the British at war, at the various fighting fronts and on the home front, an impression of a British subject, loyal to the Crown, fearless in the face of the enemy, strong, determined, and above all (and in contrast to the enemy) fair, just, and with right on their side, was created. Idealized characters with their idealized actions (in some cases stereotypical characters and stereotypical actions) were placed in opposition either to 'the enemy' in films such as *Went the Day Well?* (Ealing 1942; Director: Alberto Cavalcanti) and *Next of Kin* (Ealing 1942; Director: Thorold Dickinson) or those who sought to undermine the British 'way of life' in films such as *Cottage to Let* (Gainsborough 1941; Director: Anthony Asquith) and *Waterloo Road* (GFD/Gainsborough 1944; Director: Sidney Gilliat). Some filmmakers (notably Michael Powell and Humphrey Jennings) at times subverted this image to comment on British society, but this was contained within an overall commonality of view that promoted a single, united representation.

The characters created in this period did not necessarily reflect real individuals at the time, but rather those that could be held up as role models of the time. It was important not only to show those in the Armed Forces and government agencies as heroic in carrying out their duty to Britain, but also to show those on the 'home front' (the miners, the dockers, the factory workers, the firemen, the Land Army, the postmistress, etc.) as equal in heroism: holding society together and retaining everything good about Britain until the troops came home. At a time (particularly in the early years of the war, and again in the aftermath) when there was so much uncertainty, fear, doubt, and anguish, the continuation of familiar actions and behaviours despite the horrendous conditions of 'total war' became a touchstone of hope against adversity.

ACTIVITY . . .

Look at the films you have studied and list some of the principal British characters in a grid like the one below. Try and get a mix of different ages, classes, ranks, and genders. Score each on a scale of 1–10 in each column (1 being weak in the quality and 10 being strong in the quality). Then do the same with the principal 'enemy' characters.

Character name	*Loyal to Crown*	*Fearless*	*Strong*	*Determined*	*Fair*	*Just*	*Right*	*Total score*

What do the scores tell you?

Do you notice anything significant about class, rank, or gender?

Where are the key differences between British and 'enemy' characters?

Are there any other columns you think should be added, or should replace those above?

In *In Which We Serve* the filmmakers show the seamen both at war and at home. Are the characteristics listed above shown differently in relation to the fighting and the home fronts?

CLASS, RANK, AND GENDER REPRESENTATION

Individual acts of heroism were celebrated more often in postwar films that sought to reinforce a British identity that filmmakers were concerned would disappear in the social and economic changes occurring as Britain rebuilt itself. During the war, collective heroism was promoted, where 'everyday heroes' came together from the farms and factories, from the pubs and pulpits, from the council house and the country house, to do their duty and to defeat a common enemy. The ship's stoker was depicted as having equal importance to the ship's captain, the air raid warden as significant a hero as the fighter pilot. Class, rank, and gender representations that dominated British film of the 1930s were quickly revised to ensure depictions of unity: a coming together of the British peoples which in itself is identified as part of the British character – unity in the face of adversity.

Thus, whilst the 1950s offered war films populated by individual (or small teams of) heroes in films such as *Reach for the Sky* (Rank/Pinnacle 1956, Director: Lewis Gilbert) *The Cruel Sea* (Ealing 1953, Director: Charles Frend), *The Wooden Horse* (British Lion/Wessex/London Films 1950, Director: Jack Lee), and *Carve Her Name With Pride* (Rank/Keyboard 1958, Director: Lewis Gilbert), films made during the war concentrated on collective actions such as that of the firemen during the blitz in *The Bells Go Down* (Ealing 1943, Director: Basil Dearden) and the documentary *Fires Were Started* (Crown Film Unit 1943, Director: Humphrey Jennings), or of an 'average' working family who have to deal with war work, and loss in *Millions Like Us* (GFD/Gainsborough 1943, Directors: Frank Launder and Sidney Gilliat).

It is unsurprising that issues of class, rank, and gender seem to pour out of virtually every British film made in this period, since these aspects were all undergoing significant change as the war progressed. The defeat of the British Expeditionary Force and the evacuation of the survivors at Dunkirk lost not only significant material reserves, but also many of the most experienced officers and non-commissioned officers the British armed forces had. As they were rebuilt post-Dunkirk (particularly the Army which had suffered significant loss, and the Royal Air Force which needed to boost its pilot training to make up for the significant losses it was suffering) the armed forces saw changes in leadership that saw many more ordinary middle-class (and even working-class) men becoming officers – something that was once reserved for the British ruling classes. As the war progressed, merit and deeds became a determinant for climbing through the ranks, and this was reflected in a growing number of films of the time, with *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (GFD/The Archers 1943, Directors: Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger) perhaps showing this most clearly as the aging, upper-class Colonel Blimp is out-performed by Lieutenant 'Spud' Wilson, a young lower middle-class, middle-ranking officer (admittedly this is with a suggestion that the young officer's ruthless nature is akin to the Nazis). *Went The Day Well?* (Ealing 1943, Director: Alberto Cavalcanti) offers a range of class and gender representations, from the Cockney evacuee who alerts British forces to the presence of the Nazi infiltrators, through the working- and middle-class land girls, to the lady of the manor. Despite offering heroic roles to those traditionally denied them, rank remains to the fore, with hierarchies (be they military or village) seen to structure society, though with challenges that reflect the changing nature of Britain at war.

With men being conscripted into the armed forces, with fighting in North Africa and the Far East, and with servicemen stationed from Iceland to India, the social make up of Britain during the war began to change. Women took on traditionally male jobs such as farming through the Women's Land Army, armaments and other factory work, and roles in the armed forces such as drivers and translators. By the middle of the war nearly 90 per cent of all single women (over 18 and under 40 years old), and 80 per cent of married women with 'grown up' children (over 14) were working, with a radical increase in typically male occupations such as heavy engineering. The arrival of retreating allied fighters (Poles, Czechs, French, etc.) on the streets of British cities, towns and villages, and the subsequent arrival of the Americans during the war and millions of American troops stationed in Britain, exposed those left to fight on the 'home front' to peoples, attitudes, and values that made them reflect on their own positions. The constant presence of imminent death (either of a loved one fighting on one of the fronts, or of those at home through bombing) also changed attitudes towards status and social position (a luxury city house was as likely to be bombed as a slum, a bank as likely as an orphanage) and barriers that had survived the First World War were now breaking down.

The resolute nature of women at war was highlighted in a number of films that often placed women in traditional male roles. In *Went The Day Well?* women (from the lady of the manor to the working-class city land girl) are forced to take up arms alongside the men to defend their village (and the country) from the infiltrating Nazi force, and even the aging, petite postmistress reluctantly takes the life of a Nazi soldier, in an axe-murder scene that must have horrified yet unified the wartime audience. Similarly in *Two Thousand Women* (GFD/Gainsborough 1944, Director: Frank Launder) a range of British national characters and characteristics are displayed as interred British women (civilian women who stayed in Europe, who were left behind by retreating British forces, or who were captured in territories overrun by the Nazis) suffer the consequences of helping Allied bombers finding their targets, and are shipped off to a Nazi concentration camp. Class barriers do not prevent the women working together to defeat their common enemy.

Accordingly the principal characters of British wartime films changed. Gainsborough introduced strong female characters in their costume dramas such as *Madonna of the Seven Moons* (GFD/Gainsborough 1944, Director: Arthur Crabtree), *They Were Sisters* (GFD/ Gainsborough 1945, Director: Arthur Crabtree) and *The Wicked Lady* (GFD/ Gainsborough 1945, Director: Leslie Arliss). There was moral contrast offered by the fact that most of these films had strong women who were aggressive in their pursuit of independence, but who suffered and were destroyed by their desires, placed alongside (or in opposition to) equally strong women who looked for compromise and partnership, women who usually prospered. Perhaps this was a message to women who had found independence during the war that whilst situations would not revert to prewar male dominance, certain freedoms and levels of independence may need to be sacrificed (for the good of the nation) when the men return from the fighting.

Similarly as the end of the war came in sight, diverse films began to look forward to what a new, postwar Britain may look like. Documentaries such as *A Diary for Timothy*

(Basil Wright/Crown Film Unit 1945, Director: Humphrey Jennings) offered predictions of a postwar society where class did not matter and where equality was the foremost principle, of a meritocracy where it was not status of birth that mattered, but of what one could offer the nation that determined futures. The earlier feature *They Came to a City* (Ealing 1944, Director: Basil Dearden) reflects this view as assorted individuals find themselves outside the gates of a mysterious city and have to decide what kind of future world they want to live in. An immediately postwar feature, and the first 'Ealing comedy' *Hue and Cry* (Ealing 1946, Director: Charles Crichton) delivers a clear view of what this postwar world would be like as thousands of London's East End boys (ragamuffins, wild, working-class) work together to prevent criminals (who are using the boys' favourite comic to pass information) from succeeding in their crimes, and round them up in a climactic scene set against a backdrop of London's destroyed docklands. This film depicts a world wherein even the lowest contribute to the rebuilding of a moralistic nation, where children of every class join together to defeat a common enemy, and where cooperation and common purpose (the very things celebrated in the war films) lead to victory.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

It was not in the interest of Britain at war to have its social and political institutions directly questioned during the war, and the Ministry of Information ensured that Parliament and the Ministry for War were never criticized or seen in a negative light. Indeed the Crown Film Unit was quickly established (by effectively 'nationalizing' John Grierson's GPO Film Unit) as the likelihood of war became a certainty, so that morale-boosting documentaries about government and military activities could be produced to assist the war effort.

However, part of Britain's national identity was rooted in the gentle mimicry and direct mockery of the music hall tradition, and whilst public favourite George Formby continued to make his traditional musical fare of feel-good 'working-class lad makes it good' stories, in films such as *Let George Do It* (Ealing/Basil Dearden 1940, Director: Marcel Varnel), and stage knockabout comics, the Crazy Gang, tried to unsuccessfully translate their acts on to film, others used their comedy to parody Britain's institutions (and still show them to be preferable to those of the Nazis). Comedian Will Hay defeated the enemy through comic ineptitude in *The Black Sheep of Whitehall* (Ealing 1941, Director: Basil Dearden) in which he plays the role of an incompetent teacher who is mistaken for a government economics expert, saving the real expert from Nazi spies who want to kidnap him. This role was reprised in *The Goose Steps Out* (Ealing 1942, Director: Basil Dearden) where the incompetent teacher is sent into Nazi Germany to replace his Nazi double and steal a secret weapon. In both films the Nazis are easily defeated by an incompetent, whilst the British institutions and authorities are portrayed as comically inept, yet the gentle criticism of 'Britishness' offers a message that is also testament to its critical strength – even if inept, British institutions are still strong and effective enough to defeat the Nazi system.

Humphrey Jennings did much to capture the social institutions of Britain in his prewar work and his wartime documentaries. In *Spare Time* (Crown Film Unit 1939, Director:

Humphrey Jennings), which was released on the eve of war, much of what could be viewed as great about Britain's institutions was woven into a patchwork of the activities that Britons engaged in outside of their working hours, from north to south, east to west. There is an eerie calm about the film when viewed with the knowledge that within a year of its release Britain, and those depicted, would be involved in 'total war', and scenes of choirs, amateur dramatics, pigeon racing, dancing, and an almost surreal kazoo marching band highlight both institutions that would be changed irrevocably by war, and simultaneously representations of institutions that in their very 'Britishness' were worth fighting for.

Whilst direct criticism of political (and more significantly military) institutions was suppressed by the Ministry of Information, some filmmakers were able to build indirect criticism into their films. Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger were such film-makers, and (possibly due to the patriotic perception of their wartime work) offered clear criticism of Britain's institutions both obliquely through their image systems and more directly through the script of *A Canterbury Tale*. Here the authorities (both civil and military) that stand on the eve of the invasion of Europe and who are central to the defeat of Nazism are portrayed as impotent in the face of the actions of the 'glue-man' (who throws glue in women's hair). In a world of wartime chaos there is a warmth in the homely attempts to maintain the world as known (the blacksmith in a traditional forge talking to the soldier who uses the mass produced tools of war; the shop names marked out on the bomb-site rubble of historic Canterbury's Rose Lane), and yet something strangely cold in the emptiness of the magistrates' court (and in Culpepper, the magistrate), and in the vast cathedral service for the soon-to-depart British soldiers. The sheep herded past as the soldiers enter the cathedral gate may have been missed by the Ministry of Information, but offer a clear critique of the way government and military viewed the servicemen. Perhaps the most obvious criticism of institutions came in the form of Humphrey Jennings' *The Silent Village* (Ministry of Information, 1943) where the Nazi atrocity in the Czech village of Lidice was transposed to a mining village in Wales. Here it is not particularly British institutions that are being exposed, but the cold logicality behind any institution that leads to atrocity.

A clearer critique of social and political institutions came in the postwar period both in films dealing directly with a fighting war, and those set in more peaceful locations. *The Dam Busters* (Allied British Picture Company 1954, Director: Michael Anderson) is essentially a celebratory biography of the inventor Barnes-Wallace and his endeavours to successfully create a 'bouncing' bomb that could be used to destroy the Ruhr Valley dams in Germany's industrial heartland. Central to this story is the reluctance and obstruction of various government ministries (including the Ministry of Armaments and the Ministry of War) in advancing the project, and the inventor's determination for the project to succeed despite such institutional indifference. Such a criticism of the two central ministries directing the war effort would not have been possible during the conflict, nor would the obvious criticism of the intellectual abilities of those directing and representing the ministries (both civilian and military) who are portrayed as largely upper-middle-class incompetents.

Similarly Ealing's wartime mocking of institutions became sharper in the immediate postwar period with *Passport to Pimlico*, and with a film that looked back to the wartime

period, *Whiskey Galore!* (Ealing 1948, Director: Alexander MacKendrick). A wartime cargo of whiskey bound for North America is wrecked off a small Hebridean island, and the islanders unite against the (English) army officer and the customs officers sent to retrieve the salvaged bottles, in a sharp critique of the inflexibility and inherent weakness of institutions when faced with a united population.

PROPAGANDA AND THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Early in the war many of Britain's film studio complexes were requisitioned by the government for use in the war effort. Some became food stores or munitions stores due to the rural nature of their locations (most of the stages at Pinewood were converted to such use) and others were used for secret operations. The studios that continued making films were put to the practical use of making propaganda by the Ministry of Information. Documentaries and features were commissioned to boost morale, to encourage Britain's allies or sympathizers to continue or increase their support, and to signal strength to the enemy.

In the build-up to war and in its early stages British cinema focused on promoting cautionary tales over spies and 'fifth columnists'. *The Lady Vanishes* (Gaumont British/Gainsborough 1938, Director: Alfred Hitchcock) offers a clear sense of more to come as two ubiquitous Englishmen abroad, Charters and Caldicott (rushing home to England for a test match), and a group of other English passengers aboard a train crossing a fictional central European country, are confronted by the country's secret police (whose accents and uniforms shred any attempt to thinly disguise their Nazi models). Charters and Caldicott (who were of course victorious, yet sporting, in the subsequent battles with the secret police) reappear in *Night Train to Munich* (TCF 1940, Director: Carol Reed) where they reprise their roles in saving a Czech inventor from being captured by the Gestapo, and again through being good sports and being determined they outwit the enemy. British values were being espoused, and a clear message sent to foreign powers.

This message was amplified and re-contextualized at another time of instability and European terror, in a retelling and updating of the story *The Scarlet Pimpernel*. Repackaged as *Pimpernel Smith* (British National 1941, Director: Leslie Howard) the actor/director reprises his role in the earlier peacetime costume drama *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (London Films 1934, Director: Harold Young), and plays a professor of archaeology who crosses into Nazi-occupied Europe to rescue refugees. The Nazis are shown as lacking in character, morality and humour, with the scene in which the Gestapo chief, General von Graum investigates the British sense of humour (concluding that it is a myth) demonstrating succinctly these flaws and highlighting them against the British strength of character, fair play and humour. The message of historical strength and the historical values of courage and cunning were not buried deeply in this film and would have sent a clear message to the enemy, paralleling an earlier British (fictitious) hero and triumph with a future one.

British documentaries of the period were clearly designed as pieces of propaganda that were often used to mitigate British defeats and highlight even the smallest of British

victories. Apart from the morale boosting function of such works, and their role in making appeals to allied or sympathetic nations to support Britain's war effort, they often had a more direct propaganda role. The Ministry of Information commissioned *Trois Chansons de Resistance* (*Three Songs of Resistance*, Ministry of Information 1943, Director: Alberto Cavalcanti) to be dropped into occupied Europe to communicate with resistance groups. Resistance groups in occupied countries would use British films for propaganda, either by ensuring they were 'discovered' by the enemy (who would then watch them and be demoralized) or in the case of the Danish resistance movement by forcibly taking over a cinema and making the audience watch films such as *Hoch der Lambeth Valk* (*Swinging the Lambeth Walk*, Ministry of Information 1941, Director: attributed to Charles Ridley) in which marching Nazi troops and even Hitler himself are edited to 'dance' to the popular song 'The Lambeth Walk'.

Whilst the fighting front was highlighted in films such as the tense submarine drama *We Dive At Dawn* (GFD/Gainsborough 1943, Director: Anthony Asquith) which promoted a determined, valiant, and united message, in the latter part of the war when victory seemed possible if not likely, British filmmakers began to focus their attention on 'winning the peace'. *Went the Day Well?* begins in a postwar period, reflecting back on wartime events and their consequences. A *Canterbury Tale* shot prior to D-Day, has its characters looking ahead to peacetime, as they slowly recover the elements of their lives lost to them during the war, and *A Diary for Timothy* considers what the future will hold for a child born in the closing months of war, and in doing so offers a new set of values for Britain to consider as it headed towards victory. Similarly the messages and values of *The Way to the Stars* (Two Cities 1945, Director: Anthony Asquith) are those of the postwar period as guests at a small hotel near a wartime airfield reflect on victory and loss, on the past and on the future, on the price of war and on the price of peace.

In the immediate aftermath of the war, filmmakers (and most probably audiences) were reluctant to engage directly with recollection of armed conflict itself, and the focus became one of reflection on these events' postwar impact, the rebuilding of Britain, and the need to offer a new generation images and stories of British heroes. *The Wooden Horse* (British Lion/Wessex/London Films 1950, Director: Jack Lee) was one of the first features to herald a change of approach in response to the war, offering a suspense-filled prisoner-of-war drama and a new set of messages and values suited to the postwar period of prosperity. The film was notably shot in a reconstructed POW camp in Germany, and featured many actors who had served in (and in some cases had been POWs during) the war.

PRODUCTION CONTEXT

The advent of war meant that filmmakers were under significant restriction and suffered shortages of materials, technicians, artists, and most of all money with which to make their films. Movement was restricted, not only due to fuel rationing but also due to whole areas being sealed off for military use. With the fall of Dunkirk British forces retreated to their island nation and this caused further restrictions on filmmakers who realized that many of the locations once available to them for shooting would now have to be replicated in Britain, and Britain was rapidly becoming a crowded place. Indeed,

in 1943 and 1944 when Powell and Pressburger were shooting A *Canterbury Tale* in east Kent, it was difficult for them to get within six miles of the coast and they had to have special passes for many of the village locations where they were filming as they were near airfields or troop marshalling yards which were classed as restricted areas for 'essential' personnel only.

Many of the skilled technicians and artists were conscripted into the armed forces, and many of the studio facilities were either requisitioned by the government for military or civil defence purposes (Pinewood had its sound stages camouflaged so that it could be used as a food storage facility for London) though some such as Denham Studios (host to Rank, Two Cities, and London Films among others) was allowed back into production as the war progressed and the Ministry of Information made a case for the value of filmmaking to the war effort. It was here that B*rief Encounter* (Eagle-Lion 1945, Director: David Lean) was shot.

Both Emeric Pressburger, and Alberto Cavalcanti were detained as enemy aliens on returning from trips abroad, narrowly escaping internment (where foreign nationals were rounded up and placed in detention camps for fear they may be enemy agents), and numerous travel restrictions were placed on other foreign nationals who were working in the film industry in Britain.

Against this background many remarkable films were made with the assistance of the Ministry of Information and the Ministry for War, and Powell and Pressburger benefited considerably from this assistance. O*ne of Our Aircraft is Missing* (British National 1941, Directors: Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger) utilized the offer both of footage of RAF bombers and the use of an RAF bomber itself to create the story of a downed bomber crew escaping through Nazi occupied Holland. It was filmed in the restricted areas around airfields in the fenland of Norfolk and this again was facilitated by the Ministry for War. Similarly, the Ministry of Information were persuaded to release the funding to make F*orty-ninth Parallel* (GFD/Ortus 1941, Director: Michael Powell) on location in Canada. The story is of five survivors of a Nazi U-boat destroyed off the coast of Canada and their attempts to cross to the neutral territory of America (the Americans had not entered the war at this point). On the way they meet the peoples of Canada – the French, the German, the British, and the Canadian – and their brutish interactions soon clarify what their Nazi values are as the filmmakers spell out an explicit message to both the allied audiences and to the Americans who were remaining neutral in the face of mounting evidence of Nazi intentions and Nazi atrocities.

Documentary filmmakers who flew with the RAF and were shipped out with the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy, were given priority in the battles of the North African Desert Campaign, and were assigned to the Normandy beaches for the D-Day invasion of Europe, following the Allied troops through to the conclusion of the war and victory. Some of this material was used in newsreels (news programming shown in cinemas as part of a programme of films), some released as documentaries, and much simply shot and stored, a record of the time of war (much of this now is archived by the Imperial War Museum in London). Filmmakers were given scarce resources because of the power of the medium in conveying messages and values. There is some irony then that this period of filmmaking ended with filmmakers returning to Europe and to

one of the subjects of the early films of the period, spying and secret agents. *Odette* (Herbert Wilcox 1950, Director: Herbert Wilcox) was a biopic of the special operations executive agent Odette Sansom who fought with the French resistance and was executed by the Gestapo, and was shot on the locations in which the events took place. The collective heroes were being replaced by individualized heroes as the restrictions of wartime filmmaking were being replaced by the freedoms of a victorious peace. Audiences were changing, and the messages and values expressed by films reflecting on the period were changing too to express new ideas and shape new opinions.

EXAMPLE EXAM QUESTIONS

1. What cinematic elements convey specific characteristics of Britain in the films you have studied?
2. What particularly British values do the central characters exhibit in the films you have studied?
3. Has the war impacted differently on the male and female characters, and how is any difference displayed?
4. The key message of films of this period is one of unity. How is this message expressed in the films you have studied?
5. Is class of any significance in the study of films from this period?
6. How have the filmmakers used sound and image to present the messages and values of their films?

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USEFUL WEBSITES

http://www.channel4.com/culture/microsites/J/ (the site for the Channel Four programme *Humphrey Jennings – The man who listened to Britain*)

http://www.britishpathe.com (the Pathé newsreel archive)

http://www.britishpictures.com (a resource offering essays, articles, reviews, and title-specific information)

http://www.britmovies.co.uk (valuable for synopses, cast lists, etc.)

http://www.iwmcollections.org.uk (the Imperial War Museum online collection)

http://www.powell-pressburger.org (a well designed fan-operated site)

▼ 14 SWINGING BRITAIN: 1963–1973

This chapter will look at

- the content and contexts of the focus films;
- why this period was such a pivotal moment for the British film industry;
- the context of messages and values underpinning a study of this period.

Focus films:	*Darling* (Anglo-Amalgamated/Vic/Appia 1965, Director: John Schlesinger)
	Performance (Warner/Goodtimes 1970, Director: Nicolas Roeg/ Donald Cammell)
Suggested comparison films:	*Billy Liar* (Vic Films 1963, Director: John Schlesinger)
	The Knack (and How to Get It) (Woodfall 1965, Director: Richard Lester)
	Get Carter (MGM/Mike Klinger 1971, Director: Mike Hodges)

It is not necessarily the dates that define this topic area, but rather the dramatic changes in filmmaking (both stylistically and in terms of subject) that occurred across this period. Roughly bounded by the transition from the films of the British New Wave (approximately 1963) and a decade later (1973) where the British film industry is seen as freefalling into decline, this topic area deals with the 'new' filmmaking that reflected the 'swinging' Britain of the 1960s. As such it offers opportunity not only to study the focus films and others from the period, but the lively and relevant social and historical background against which (and from which) these films were produced. Broader issues

of changing representations are central to this study and should be considered in relation to the developments across the period of time.

KEY TERM

SWINGING BRITAIN This term relates to changes in a whole range of attitudes, behaviours, and moralities where Britain finally shook off the bleak, postwar way of living, where caution, practicality, repression, and obedience were the norms. The term 'swinging' comes from a form of music that was more relaxed and open in its style. The 'swinging sixties' really began in 1963 with the emergence of the Beatles and the Mersey music scene, and its London counterpart. With full employment, young people had a greater disposable income, and music and fashion came to dominate the culture. Confident in peace and prosperity, this 'swinging' approach developed across social boundaries, and an 'anything goes' attitude was popularized.

This pivotal moment of British cinema can be used as a platform to study a range of issues in terms of messages and values including:

- London versus the regions – 'swinging' capital city, with the rest of the country depicted through the dirt of realism;
- National/regional identity – how areas are marked out as 'different' and, in some cases, how the country is unified under a 'new' identity;
- Class, sexuality, and gender representation – how changing attitudes towards class are depicted, how the eroding of class barriers is represented, and how, with the 'sexual revolution' in full swing, a new-found liberation is reflected in film;
- Social and political institutions, and the rise of youth – the relationships of individuals to family and more formalized institutions, and how youth takes centre stage in this decade of rebellion and redefined boundaries through music, fashion, and lifestyle choices;
- production context – the films of this period in relation to a broader context of British film, the tightening grip of television, and within the context of key filmmakers.

DARLING – SUMMARY

Director John Schlesinger had established his 'swinging sixties' credentials two years earlier with his successful *Billy Liar*, the story of a repressed working-class young man from Manchester who longs for the excitement of a modern world offered in the lure of London, but who retreats into fantasy rather than stride into his own future. The actress Julie Christie goes to London at the end of the film, and Schlesinger uses her again as the lead, Diana Scott, in *Darling*, in which she presents the same confident sense of self, and the same desire for freedom as she depicted in her earlier role.

Case Study: *John Schlesinger* (1926–2003)

Oxford graduate and actor, John Schlesinger initially worked in television finding fame through a documentary about Waterloo station, *Terminus* (BBC, 1961). A British New Wave director he made a number of highly notable films throughout the period using the observational form developed from documentary including; *A Kind of Loving* (Anglo Amalgamated/Waterhall/Vic, 1962), *Billy Liar* (1963) and *Far from the Madding Crowd* (Emi/Vic/Appia, 1967). His later Hollywood work achieved worldwide acclaim through films such as *Midnight Cowboy* (UA/Jerome Hellman,1969), *Sunday, Bloody Sunday* (UA/Vectia, 1971), and *Marathon Man* (Paramount, 1976).

Here in *Darling*, however, Schlesinger places Diana in the shallow, fashionable London of the wealthy and powerful that serves as a stark contrast to the industrial northern back streets, and dated funeral parlour of his previous work. Whilst the story addresses issues that at the time were still considered by many as taboo (such as sex, pregnancy, abortion, homosexuality, and infidelity), and offers fashionable 'swinging' attitudes, *Darling* is much more attached to an earlier, traditional style of filmmaking than many others made around this time, and particularly lacks reference to the music scene of the time (which, with the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and many others, was changing the face of music worldwide).

NOTEBOX . . .

Changing the law

Darling seemed to portray many activities as the 'norm', as acceptable even though they were actually illegal. Subsequent changes in the law happened throughout the late 1960s:

- 1967 Abortion Act ending decades of illegal 'back street' abortions;
- 1967 Sexual Offences Act decriminalizing homosexual acts between consenting adults in private;
- 1969 Divorce Reform Act making it easier for couples to divorce.

The film begins when the young model Diana meets and starts a relationship with Robert Gold (Dirk Bogarde) a television arts programme director in London. Leaving their partners (and more significantly for the audience of the day, Robert abandons his children) to move in together, they soon become part of the trendy arts/media crowd in 'swinging' London, where Diana begins mixing with men who can progress her career and who can lead her to the lifestyle she wants. It is this self-serving determination to become rich and famous that marks Diana Scott out as a different kind of lead female character, one who contrasts with the strong women of the 1940s war films, but perhaps

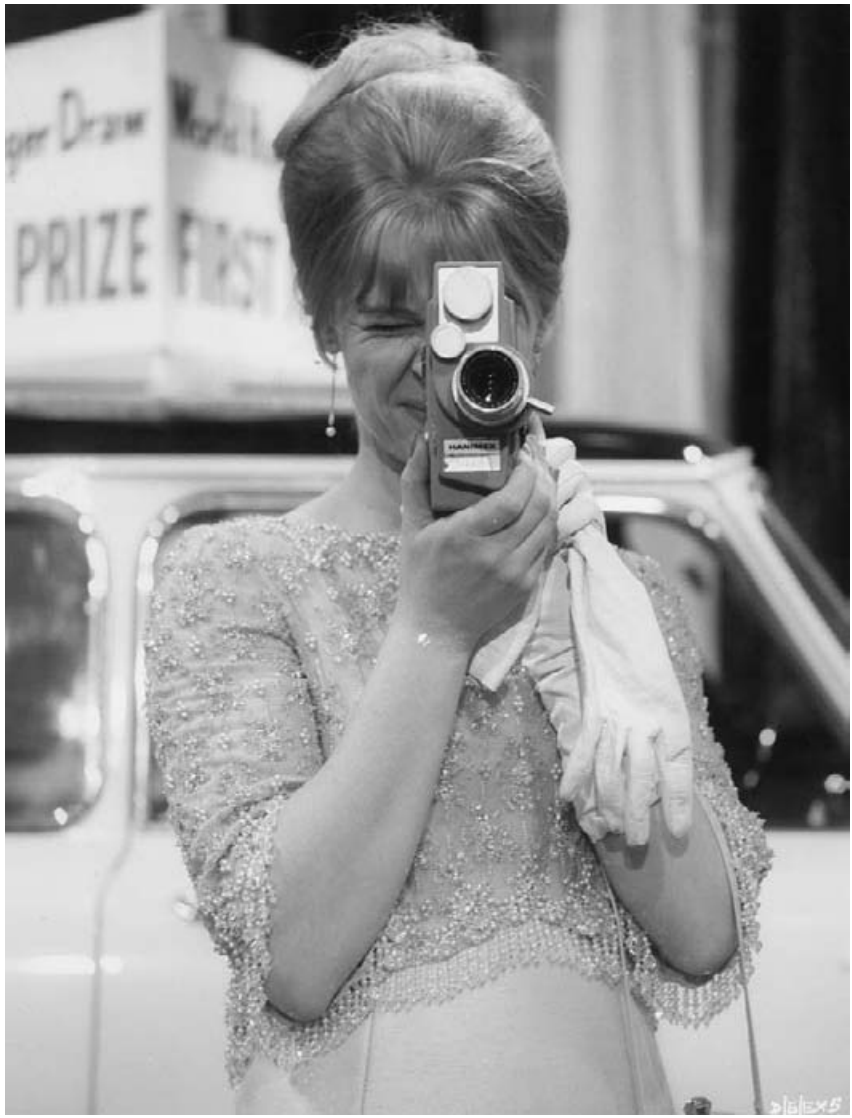

Figure 14.1 *Darling*
Source: British Film Institute

has more in common with Margaret Lockwood's Lady Skelton in *The Wicked Lady* (GFD/Gainsborough, 1945 Director: Leslie Arliss).

Robert introduces her to public relations executive Miles Brand (Laurence Harvey) with whom she has sex in order to get a part in a thriller film. Miles leads her into a higher social realm of the international 'jet-set' where she is met by a different set of attitudes, behaviour, and morals, all of which she embraces with enthusiasm and a 'carefree' look. Discovering she is pregnant she casually has an abortion, quickly falling further into a world of outlandish parties, cross-dressing, sexual freedom, decadence, and ultimately, emptiness.

Returning to London, Robert leaves her, calling her a whore. Miles then casts her in a major advertising campaign as 'The Happiness Girl', taking her to Italy for a location shoot. Here she meets an Italian widower, Prince Cesare, and tries to fill her empty life by dabbling in Catholicism. Cesare asks her to marry him, but refusing she returns to London, where disillusionment leads her to accept his offer. As a Princess, Diana has achieved the riches and fame she set out for, yet still remains unhappy and empty.

Left alone by her aged husband, she retreats to London and back into the arms of Robert who persuades her (easily) into his bed. Her thoughts of re-establishing a stable and meaningful relationship are cruelly crushed when Robert reveals that he slept with her for revenge and then he packs her off back to Rome. At London Airport the press hound the Princess della Romita as she returns to the empty prison of her loveless marriage and the life she has created.

From the opening credits Schlesinger is offering a clear message and commentary on the emerging 'swinging sixties' and the consequences for those whose immorality (or perhaps amorality) leads rather than guides them.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Look at the opening sequences in *Darling* where Diana Scott is introduced. What values do you think she displays?
- Consider Diana's relationships with men. Particularly look at her relationships with Robert, Miles, and Cesare. Does power rest in a traditional way with men in these relationships, with Diana, or with each at different times? What message do you think is being conveyed here?
- Why do you think John Schlesinger portrays Diana in the way he does?
- Which of the men in the film do you think represents the values of the time? In which specific scenes or sequences are these values conveyed?
- Create a 'relationship map' for Diana, charting her journey from partner to partner. Indicate on it her level of happiness by numbering each relationship on a scale of one to ten, with one being saddest and ten being happiest. What do you notice about her relationships?
- Robert says to Diana 'Your idea of fidelity (being faithful) is not having more than one man in bed at the same time'. Do you think Robert represents a

continued

different set of morals to Diana? Are there any particular scenes or sequences where their differences are heightened?

- What messages are conveyed by Miles and Robert? Do you think they are of the same class, or do you think they differ in some way? What tells you this?
- Adultery, casual sex, and abortion are all dealt with in a matter-of-fact manner. What does this tell you about the values of the time?
- Age and class dominate the representations in this film – what do you think John Schlesinger is trying to say about each, and about their relationship to each other? Is there something corrupting about the older figures in the film, or is it the drive of youth in Diana that corrupts?

PERFORMANCE – SUMMARY

Performance is often cited as the directorial debut of Nicolas Roeg, but it is worth noting that this was actually a collaborative effort with writer Donald Cammell, and also worth noting that Roeg is also credited as director of photography. It was released at the end of a decade that had seen the optimism of the early 1960s disappear amidst the harsher realities of organized crime, drug abuse, and the end of a period of economic boom in the UK, and the steady spiral of violence of the Vietnam war crushing idealism on the world stage.

Warner Brothers who financed the film kept it back from audiences for three years due to their disbelief at the excess they had funded. Heavily edited in this period to damp down concerns over drug use, and violence, it is often seen as the film that put a 'full stop' on the 1960s, and is certainly one that stands on the dividing line between 1960s commercialism and the more self-indulgent cinema of the 1970s.

Case Study: *Nicholas Roeg* (1928–)

Beginning his career with MGM British at the age of 18 as an apprentice editor, Roeg developed his career as a cinematographer from the mid-1950s, working as second-unit cameraman on *Lawrence of Arabia* (Columbia/Horizon, 1962 Director: David Lean). After co-directing and acting as director of photography on *Performance* (1970) he consolidated his reputation with *Walkabout* (Max L. Raab/Si Litvinoff, 1970), and *Don't Look Now* (BL/Casey/Eldorado, 1973). His trademarks of confusion, boredom, and frank sexual scenes continued through the 1970s and 1980s with *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (British Lion, 1976) and *Bad Timing* (Rank/RPC, 1980), though his most successful film to date has been his adaptation of Roald Dahl's *The Witches* (Warner/Lorimar, 1990).

Performance is a complex film in which actor James Fox plays Chas Devlin, a nightmarishly violent small-time enforcer for a London gangster (Harry Flowers played by Johnny Shannon), whose 'skill' and talent for violence and intimidation has earned him a reputation as a 'performer'.

The first third of the film is relatively simple to follow as it stumbles through a fairly realistic depiction of the late 1960s London's criminal underworld, where in a particularly vicious attack on betting shop owner Joey Maddox (Anthony Valentine) Chas is witnessed killing him, implicating his boss and making him an accessory to murder. Harry Flowers has one option; Chas must be eliminated.

On the run, Chas decides to stay in London and rents a room in a Notting Hill flat from aging, failing rock star Turner (played by Mick Jagger, whose career with the Rolling

Figure 14.2 *Performance*
Source: British Film Institute

Stones was in turmoil at this point amid sordid sex and drug scandals, and a high profile 'drugs bust'). Here he contacts Tony Farrell (Kenneth Colley) to get a fake passport made up so he can escape the country.

Turner lives in a world of sexual depravity and heavy drug use with two girlfriends, Pherber (Anita Pallenberg) and Lucy (Michèle Breton), and is a complete opposite to Chas. Recognizing something of his younger self in Chas, Turner decides to expose him to the delights of sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll, offering him his girlfriends, and progressively stronger drugs.

It is here that the film takes a major stylistic turn, as the structure of the film itself replicates the slow disintegration of Chas's personality by using a jumble of editing styles and visual effects, jump cutting, shifting and confusing point of view, and blurring the line between reality and (drug-fuelled) hallucination. The directors introduce an increasingly frequent use of mirrors from this point onwards to illustrate not only the psychological state, but the suggestion that the two men are mirrors of each other.

In the house Chas's personality slowly breaks down and he begins to assume Turner's identity, cross-dressing, being fed magic mushrooms, having sex with Turner's girlfriends, and discussing eastern poetry and 'paradise'. Turner, however, slowly drops the hippy 'flower-child' personality and becomes increasingly aggressive, and out of control.

The film ends with Tony double-crossing Chas, and Harry Flowers' men arriving to take him away. Before leaving, Chas goes up to Turner's bedroom and shoots him in the head (an ultimate 'trip'), and is then taken away to Harry Flowers and certain death.

The explicit sexual nature of the film and the brutal violence set a new yardstick for British cinema, and presented the BBFC with the first of many similar problems it would face in the 1970s where the mix of sex and violence created suggestions of a link between the two (even sexualizing violence).

ACTIVITY . . .

- Donald Cammell and Nicolas Roeg deliberately contrasted the working-class London underworld with a middle-class arts/music background. What do you think they achieve in doing this? What does the 'collision' of values expressed in the film, say about the society of the time?
- Chas Devlin is undoubtedly a villain. Are there moments when you become sympathetic to his character? Grid the film horizontally into scenes (scene one at the left) and then map your level of sympathy with him onto this (zero at the bottom meaning no sympathy and ten at the top meaning very sympathetic). Compare the graph line produced with your peers. What do you notice from this? Is the audience 'positioned' into a view on Chas, or does each individual react differently to the messages and values on screen?

- How are the women used by Chas and Turner in this film? Does this change across the film? What difference is there between the women? What values do these representations express?
- Compare this film with one from earlier in the decade. Is there a different message emerging from each? What does this tell you about the changing values of society across the period?
- In a group, choose to discuss either the male or female values expressed in the film and make a list of positives and negatives. Compare lists. Is there significant difference in the balance between positives and negatives across the genders? Do the positives outweigh the negatives, or vice versa? What messages are established about men and/or women in this film?
- The blurring of traditional divides (between male and female, working class and middle class, criminals and 'civilians, etc.) is central to this film. Choose a particular area of representation and list five examples of where it is blurred. What do you think the directors were trying to achieve in doing this?
- List the differing styles, techniques and filmic references that the directors have used in this film. Chart them on a time line, alongside key points in the story. Is there a relationship between the structure and style of the film and its story? How do they help convey messages?
- The film is set against the backdrop of London – the 'swinging capital' of the world. Do you think the messages and values would have been different had it been set elsewhere (Liverpool or Newcastle for example)? If so, in what way, and why? Take a sequence from the film and transpose it to another location. What would you change to make it 'fit' the new location? How are the messages and values altered?

LONDON VERSUS THE REGIONS

Whilst *Billy Liar* is set in Bradford much of its bleak realism is countered by Billy Fisher's dreams of heading south to London, where everything is more dynamic, more exciting, more 1960s. Similarly with the Beatles' first film *A Hard Day's Night* (UA/Proscenium, 1964 Director: Richard Lester) the scenes in the north of England are stark and almost belong to a preceding decade in contrast to the lively excitement of 'swinging' London, where even Ringo's departure to the Thames foreshore and the war-damaged docklands leads to adventure. London is very much depicted as offering a sense of 'something happening', of the 'new', and of the 'now' that the locations outside the city did not offer.

Regional-based filmmaking continued as it had started with the 'kitchen-sink' dramas of the British New Wave through films such as *A Taste of Honey* (British Lion/Bryanstone/Woodfall, 1961 Director: Tony Richardson), *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (British Lion/Bryanstone/Woodfall, 1962 Director: Tony Richardson, and *This Sporting Life* (Rank/Independent Artists, 1963 Director: Lindsay Anderson).

KEY TERM

BRITISH NEW WAVE A movement of well-educated, leftist filmmakers largely from a northern England, working-class background, that used 'realism' to construct stories of working-class lives ('kitchen-sink dramas'). Originally working on short films and documentaries as part of their 'free cinema' concept they graduated to feature film production establishing a north of England production base to compete with what they saw as a London-focused and London-centred industry. They included filmmakers Lindsay Anderson, Karel Reisz, and Tony Richardson.

From 1963 onwards however, both films and filmmakers began to gravitate towards London, the centre of music and fashion. This of course changed the films that these filmmakers made, and the representations of the regions they offered when viewed from the vibrant, exciting, rebuilding, metropolis. Tony Richardson stayed with his regional roots, but transposed them historically, directing *Tom Jones* (UA/Woodfall, 1963), a costumed romp through eighteenth-century society, whilst Karel Reisz and Lindsay Anderson moved from realism towards surrealism in *Morgan, a Suitable Case for Treatment* (British Lion/Quintra 1966, Director: Karel Reisz), and *If . . .* (Paramount/Memorial 1968, Director: Lindsay Anderson). In *Morgan, a Suitable Case for Treatment*, Reisz has transposed his northern, Communist hero to London, and in *If . . .* Anderson removes all sense of location by placing the action in an anonymous public school.

Both *Georgy Girl* (Columbia/Everglades, 1966 Director: Silvio Narizzano) and Richard Lester's *The Knack* (*and How to Get It*) told the stories of northern working-class girls (Lynn Redgrave and Rita Tushingham respectively) coming to London to seek their fortunes and getting caught up in the 'swinging London' scene of 'cool' fashion, sexual liberation, and disappearing class boundaries. All this (of course) against the backdrop of a very recognizable London with its grand buildings (in the case of *Georgy Girl*) and its bomb sites and suburban terraces (in *The Knack*).

It is a point worth making that as the period moved towards its close, London became associated with decadence and a collapsing society, as illustrated by *Performance*. It is interesting that among the last of the period's significant films should be one that has its hero leave London to return to his roots in the North-East of England, perhaps symbolically demonstrating that the 'swinging sixties' were coming to a close. *Get Carter* has Michael Caine's Jack Carter leave the London underworld with its 'classy' apartments, drugs, and 'model-like' girlfriends, to return to his Newcastle home town to avenge his brother's death. Here he finds grimy bed and breakfast lodgings, visits a smoke filled 'traditional' pub, searches through crumbling rundown terraces, and interacts with hardened women. Indeed the 'locals' are shot in a way to emphasize their 'otherness' to Jack Carter's softened London manner (the camera even highlighting one with six fingers on one hand).

This difference is embedded not only in the location, but in the style of construction. In the early part of the film, as Jack Carter leaves London, the style reflects much of its

contemporaries in using hand-held camera, jump cuts, unusual framing, canted angles, etc. Once in Newcastle a realist style is adopted which sharpens the contrast between the two cities. Indeed there is almost a sense of a return to the British New Wave style of filmmaking here, where there is seemingly less structuring, and more use of the city's real backdrop to work against.

Whilst the distinction between London and the regions is still there as it was at the start of the period, by the end of the 'swinging sixties' the realism of the north seems more attractive than the distorted fantasy of London.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Take one of the films you have studied and transpose its locations (a regional location becomes London; London becomes a regional location). How does this affect the messages and values expressed? Is there anything else you would need to change to ensure that the story still works?
- What messages and values are expressed by London at the start of the period? Can you find examples of how this is expressed in a film you have studied? Does London represent different messages and values at the end of the period? Can you again find examples of how this is expressed in a film you have studied?
- In a group, discuss how style differs between films (or sequences) set in London and those set elsewhere in the country. Is there a difference between the styles used to depict town and country outside of London? Is central London (the tourist spots for example) shot differently from other parts of London? What does a differing style for a particular location do to help convey messages and values?
- Is there a difference between the London of *Darling* and the London of *Performance*? How is each depicted, and to what effect?

NATIONAL/REGIONAL IDENTITY

Whilst there was a clear focus on London and on the difference between the metropolis and the regions, what were simultaneously emerging were new regional identities, which in turn developed a new national identity. People from the north were depicted as 'flocking' to London, yet they were not overawed by the city, but instead brought an edge of realism with them, and a healthy dose of cynicism.

This is symbolized well in *A Hard Day's Night* where the Beatles constantly criticize, challenge and undermine the old figures of authority, including the police, 'elders and betters', the upper class, and bowler-hatted 'city gents'. This mocking of an old national identity (forged largely during the war years) is one that Richard Lester continued in *The Knack (and How to Get It)* where he captures local people in a documentary realist fashion, adding a commentary of their 'thoughts', all of which are critical of the attitudes

and behaviour of the young people in the film. It is with additional irony that he has the central character, Colin (Michael Crawford), repeat and echo these same views as he fights his repression and his desires to have 'the knack' that housemate Tolen (Ray Brooks) has with women.

Suddenly in the 'swinging sixties' national identity was not about defocusing on differences but was about celebrating differences within a unifying context of freedom. Thus, Nancy Jones' (Rita Tushingham) broad Lancastrian accent is not out of place against the southern sounds of Tolen and Colin, as it is made insignificant against their shared ability (to varying degrees) to celebrate their freedom through action (such as in the sequence of bringing the bed home from the scrap yard).

Furthering the national identity was the sense of England in general (and London in particular) as the centre of the fashion world. Throughout the films of this period, there is a unifying representation of a fashion-conscious, youthful nation, eager to spur ahead into a future shaped by (as Prime Minister Harold Wilson termed) the 'white heat of technology'. The nation is seen as new, as 'cool', as witty, and as forward thinking, not held back by out-dated notions of class, caste, religion, gender or rank.

Music also defined this new national identity from the Beatles' films through the Dave Clark Five's *Catch Us If You Can* (Anglo Amalgamated/Bruton, 1965 Director: John Boorman), to Mick Jagger's acting in *Performance*. Indeed, not only were there films where pop artists performed, but the soundtrack scene also changed away from orchestral numbers to tracks that could be (or already had been) released as singles. This encouraged the potential for music to grow beyond a regional unifier to a national unifier, and, when coupled to the new trend for music shows on television, this became a powerful force in defining a new national identity that was forward looking, not anchored into its past.

Nowhere do all these ingredients combine more powerfully than in Lindsay Anderson's *If . . .*, where the setting is a bastion of national identity, the public school. Here we meet an individual, Mick Travis (Malcolm McDowell) who makes a stand for freedom and against the old authorities. His music and fashion inspired youthful sense of what could be, is suppressed not only by the authorities (in the shape of the school teachers, heads of houses, and the headmaster) but also by those of his peers who choose to collaborate with them. His protest spirals into anarchy and an armed (but fashionable) rebellion where the authority figures come under sustained attack from the rooftops after he sets the school hall ablaze during the Founders' Day ceremony. Mick Travis was the youthful herald of the new national identity, where respect had to be earned through action, not through historic 'right'.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Create two columns, one marked 'old national identity' and the other marked 'new national identity'. From the films you have studied note down the defining features of the national identity that existed at the start of the

'swinging sixties' and those of the national identity that emerged during the period. Are they completely separated from each other or are there some features that appear on both lists? Why do you think this is?

- How important do you feel regional representations are? Is it right that they become lessened in the face of aspects of national identity?
- Look at the principal characters from the films you have studied. Does their regional background affect the messages and values they promote? If so, in what ways?
- From a film you have studied, note down where all the characters appear to be from (this can be place specific, or as loose as 'southern England'). Is there a significant pattern to their backgrounds? Does it vary between principal and background characters?
- Are there any other categories you can think of that would help to define an emerging national identity in this period? Which films can evidence these? Do these categories offer any further insight into the films' messages and values?

CLASS, SEXUALITY, AND GENDER REPRESENTATION

From *Darling*'s social climbing Diana Scott, through *Morgan, a Suitable Case for Treatment*'s 'class traitor' Morgan Delt (David Warner), to *If . . .*'s public schoolboy Mick Travis, class is directly addressed in many of the films of the 'swinging sixties'. Indeed it is the very challenging of class boundaries that may well have helped the period 'swing', by encouraging a wider social intermingling, and exposure to a broader perspective.

Some filmmakers, such as Ken Loach, chose to approach issues of class (and indeed sexuality and gender) more directly still through films such as *Poor Cow* (Anglo Amalgamated/Vic/Fenchurch, 1967 Director: Ken Loach). Here, in a contrastingly un-swinging part of London, Loach introduces Joy (Carol White) the young mother who lives a life of squalor, confined by her position in society, and by her petty criminal husband. Joy is almost a mirror image of *Darling*'s Diana Scott, and uses her physical attributes and some of the same techniques as Diana to further her aims, but to significantly less effect (largely because of the difference in starting point).

Joy is also an echo of one of the many women that appear in *Alfie* (Paramount/Sheldrake, 1966 Director: Lewis Gilbert). Here, working-class chauffeur, Alfie, seduces women from a variety of classes and backgrounds, offering commentaries on each one, and highlighting their class differences. This, of course, is all offered in a sense of irony, with Alfie representing the 'old' establishment views, which a young, modern, 'swinging' audience would not share. It is interesting that as Alfie climbs the social ladder, meeting modern women, he becomes less confident in 'handling' them – the breaking of traditional class barriers and of traditional gender roles confuses his sense of who he is.

Whilst a traditional sense of masculinity carries across the films of the 1940s and 1950s, the 'swinging sixties' not only sees a shift of focus towards representations of women, but also of non-traditional men, or men adopting non-traditional roles/attitudes (such as Chas Devlin in *Performance*), and clearly the suggestion is that there is a process of evolution in terms of attitudes occurring in this period. This change is illustrated well by an obscure film from the middle of the period, *Work is a Four-Letter Word* (Universal/Cavalcade, 1968 Director: Peter Hall). This futuristic fantasy looks to a time of full employment and an entrenched social hierarchy, where the only unemployed man, Valentine Brose (David Warner) is forced to take a job as a power station attendant much to the delight of his girlfriend Betty Dorrick (Cilla Black – who also sings the title song). Here he grows magic mushrooms that eventually (due to an explosion) 'liberate' the whole town from class and gender restraints.

The nudity and sexual scenes of Lindsay Anderson's *If . . .* set the ground for the explicit sexual scenes in *Performance*, for the telephone sex of *Get Carter*, and the violent rapes in *A Clockwork Orange* (Warner/Polaris, 1971 Director: Stanley Kubrick), and *Straw Dogs* (Talent Associates/Amberbroco, 1971 Director: Sam Peckinpah). Here both sex and sexuality came onto the agenda explicitly and were explored in a variety of ways. It is interesting that, despite the moral freedoms granted by the 'swinging sixties', sexually active women were generally punished for their actions (from being trapped in a loveless marriage in *Darling*, to being murdered in *Get Carter*). Whilst attitudes seemed to have changed radically in this period, it appears that they had not shifted that far – the groundwork was done here that set the path for today's society.

ACTIVITY . . .

- What differences can you see in terms of class representation, gender representation, and the representation of sexuality across films you have studied spanning this period?
- Talk to parents and grandparents (and others in older generations) about what their understanding of class, gender roles, and sexuality were in the 1963–1973 period. Do they recall seeing any of the films you have studied at the time? If so, do they recall their reactions to them? Do they recall if they influenced their attitudes or behaviour?
- Take the characters from one of the films you have studied and swap their class and/or genders. How does the swap affect the film's messages and values. Is there anything that now needs to be done to the film's story to allow it to work?
- Consider your own class/gender/sexuality. Does this affect the way you perceive the films you have studied? If so, in what way? Discuss this with your peers. Consider whether you each have individual responses to these issues of representation or whether the filmmakers have positioned you into a preferred response.

- What would you need to do to one of the films you have studied to take its representations back to the preceding decade? What would you need to do if you were remaking the film for today's audience? Consider both story and stylistic devices.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND THE RISE OF YOUTH

Representations of young people were being established by the British New Wave in the 1950s, though these were largely contextualized by their family relationships, the communities they lived in, and the organizations they worked for (including some mention of trade unions and political parties). The figure of the autonomous youth did not fully emerge until the films of swinging Britain, and in the early period there was little to distinguish them from their adult forebearers.

Quickly however, through films such as *A Hard Day's Night*, *The Knack (and How to Get It)*, and *Work is a Four-Letter Word*, the 'swinging', fashion conscious, music loving, trendy, and most importantly independent young person arrived on screen. Little in the way of family relationships were displayed other than those consciously entered into (marriage etc.), and work seemed to play very little part in the lives of these young people, so this contextualizing institution was also removed from them. Political and generally of the left, these youths would discuss political concepts but often with a cynical or ironic sense of 'truth' or understanding, that gave such discussions a throw-away quality. This is well illustrated in *The Knack (and How to Get It)* where the discussion comes rattling along at speed, and where there is little time to sense whether the characters are actually meaning what they say.

Case Study: *Richard Lester* (1932–)

Born in Philadelphia, USA, Richard Lester began his career in American television, arriving in Britain in 1956 where he worked with Spike Milligan and Peter Sellers on the television comedy 'A Show Called Fred' (BBC, 1956). This in turn led to working with them again on a short film *The Running, Jumping and Standing Still Film* (1959), which acted as a very effective calling card for his first features *A Hard Day's Night* (1964), *Help!* (UA/Walter Shenson/Suba Films, 1965), and *The Knack (and How to Get It)* (1965).

This early success was developed through the successful *Musketeer* series of films in the 1970s and 1980s, but his style of filmmaking dropped out of fashion and his career faltered from the 1980s onwards.

Richard Lester encapsulates the image of swinging Britain better than any other director of the time. In using odd, surreal humour accompanied by a broad use of cinematic devices, he was able to capture the moment in all its excitement, experimentation and triviality. His insolent use of film technique mirrored his subject's insolence in the face of tradition and authority, and so form and content merged perfectly, if only for a short while.

The political landscape of the period is one of consensus politics with power swapping between Harold Wilson's Labour government and Edward Heath's Conservatives. As the period progressed the prosperity that was present at the start of swinging Britain was in a steady decline, with rising concern over unemployment, membership of the Common Market (now the European Union), immigration, and the decline in traditional heavy industries (coal, steel, shipbuilding, etc.). This changing landscape is reflected in the films of the period, as the exuberance of the early films gives way to decadence and political reflection in the later ones.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Discuss with members of older generations what it was like to be young in the period of swinging Britain. Try to discover what their relationships with family and community were like. What do they remember of the politics of the time? Do they recall their attitude towards tradition and authority?
- What messages and values do the youths convey in the films you have studied? Are they different to those conveyed by older characters? If so, in what way?
- What macro (narrative, genre, etc.) and micro techniques do the filmmakers of swinging Britain use to bring social and political issues to the fore?
- If you were to re-make one of the films you have studied for a modern audience, what social and political values would you want to convey? What changes to the film's story/structure would you need to make for it to succeed?
- How are figures of authority depicted in the films you have studied? What messages and values are being promoted in this depiction?

PRODUCTION CONTEXT

The development of television in Britain throughout the 1950s encouraged not only new approaches to filmmaking that filtered through in the 1960s, but also the development of a training ground for filmmakers to hone their craft and to practise their skills. Both BBC and the later arrival ITV had regional production centres, which allowed the regions (such as Manchester) to develop and retain local talent (which differed

from the film industry which centred on London). Television gave a solid production base for the 1960s boom in film production to build from, and provided a body of skilled labour to meet the creative demands.

The strength of the British New Wave filmmakers in the early 1960s attracted the interest of the Hollywood studios who were looking to outsource much of their production so that they could downsize their operations (and operational costs) in their extensive studios in Hollywood. The money that companies like Warners and MGM brought with them was a very welcome boost to the British film industry which was used to filmmaking on a minimal budget, and the majority of the films of swinging Britain are co-productions with Hollywood companies.

Towards the end of the 1960s however, the Hollywood studios were in severe financial crisis back in America, and the decision was made for them to axe British co-production, and axe their offices in the UK. The withdrawal of such significant amounts of funding was a considerable shock to the British industry, and it immediately meant that the less commercial films (like *Work is a Four-Letter Word*, and perhaps even films like *Performance*) could not now be made as they would not be commercially viable. This led to an immediate crash as the industry struggled into the 1970s with the final committed American funds drying up. By 1973 the industry was on its knees. Cinemas were being converted into bingo halls, and the era of swinging Britain was truly and unquestionably over.

Case Study: *Anglo-Amalgamated*

Anglo-Amalgamated was set up in 1945 at studios in Merton Park, London, by Nat Cohen and Stuart Levy to make low-budget thrillers (B-movies). They produced Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (1960), a number of horror films including Roger Corman's *The Masque of the Red Death* (1964) and *The Tomb of Ligeia* (1964), and all the Carry On Films up until 1966. In the early 1960s they began working with some of the most important filmmakers of the period including John Schlesinger, Tony Richardson, John Boorman, and Ken Loach.

Losing significant financial advantage as the Hollywood studios pulled out of British production at the end of the 1960s, this small, but shrewd studio fell into financial difficulties, and in 1969 was bought out by ABPC/EMI.

EXAMPLE EXAM QUESTIONS

1 How are issues of liberation explored in the films you have studied?

2 What for you are the most striking messages and values of the period as conveyed in the films you have studied?

continued

3 Do the films you have studied have anything to say about class in this period?

4 The films of swinging Britain are essentially about freedom. Discuss how the films you have studied engage with the issue of freedom.

5 Is there any benefit to understanding messages and values in the films of swinging Britain in exploring the attitudes of young people in the films you have studied?

6 What can you discover about issues of identity from looking at the depiction of male and/or female characters in the films you have studied?

7 What particular images/use of sound capture best the messages and values of swinging Britain in the films you have studied?

FURTHER READING

MacCabe, Colin (1998) *Performance*, London: BFI Film Classics.

Murphy, Robert (1992) *Sixties British Cinema*, London: BFI.

Walker, Alexander (1974) *Hollywood England: the British Film Industry in the Sixties*, London: Michael Joseph.

Savage, Jon (1993) 'Snapshots of the sixties', *Sight and Sound*, 3(5): 14–18. (The 1960s may haunt us – but what did happen exactly when pop music and swinging London took to celluloid in films ranging from *A Hard Day's Night* to *Performance?* Savage discusses the lasting influence of 1960s pop culture in relation to *A Hard Day's Night*, *Blow-Up* and *Performance*.)

USEFUL WEBSITES

http://www.britishpictures.com (a resource offering essays, articles, reviews, and title specific information)

http://www.britmovies.co.uk (valuable for synopses, cast lists, etc.)

15 PASSIONS AND REPRESSIONS

In this chapter we look at:

- the representation of gender, sexuality and the family;
- the social and institutional context of *Beautiful Thing*;
- definitions of realism;
- narrative structure;
- the 'coming of age' film;
- New Queer Cinema;
- how messages and values are constructed in the focus film.

NOTEBOX . . .

Focus film:	*Beautiful Thing* (Hettie Macdonald, 1998)
Suggested comparative film:	*My Summer of Love* (Pavel Pawlikovski, 2004)

This topic is one of the widest ranging of those offered. It is not limited to a specific period or genre. Passions and repressions as an area of study initially sounds rather abstract and difficult to define:

- We can be passionate about a great variety of things – people, places, sport, art, food, wine, etc.
- A passion can be a positive force or a destructive one – hatred can be defined as a passion.
- How would you define the term passion? Is there anything that you are passionate about?
- Looking again at the first point above, which films have you seen recently which take passion as a central subject?

Because of the range of passions experienced by human beings, films belonging to different genres, in different styles and appealing to different audiences can be studied in this topic area.

KEY TERM

THEME In analysing the subject matter of films and the way that they construct messages and values, we need to distinguish between the story and the themes. The plot is the action or story of the film; when someone asks you what a film is about, this is usually what you would relate to them. The themes of a film are what the plot makes you think about, the way that the film comments on wider issues. For example the story of *Bridget Jones's Diary* is: a 'thirty-something' single woman falls in love with the wrong man before realizing that Mark Darcy is her true love. The theme of the film is: the changing position of women in society – now that women are independent in terms of career and financial power how does this affect their traditional roles in society and their relationships with men?

ACTIVITY . . .

Think of a film you have seen recently. Write a sentence which describes the main plot and then one which refers to the themes.

Here are some suggestions of films with passion as a central theme:

Billy Elliot (Stephen Daldry, 1999)
Billy's passion for dance is a way of expressing his difference from his family and community.

Bend it like Beckham (Gurinder Chadha, 2002)
Jesminder's desire to play football is her way of defining herself to her family.

ACTIVITY . . .

Now add two films of your own, including a short sentence explaining the central plot of the film.

In both of these examples the passion which is explored – dancing, football – is driven by the need of the central character to express who they are and how they are different from the expectations placed on them. Another way of putting this is to say that Billy's dancing is part of his identity as a young man, which in turn signifies his character as an adult.

KEY TERM

IDENTITY The concept of identity refers to the way that different groups (family, friends, schools, government, etc.) in society see us and the way in which we see ourselves. These two views are likely to be different, even conflicting. The factors affecting our identity include gender, race, religion, class, sexuality and nationality which are interlinked and have become more and more complicated. Some people may wish to identify themselves as gay; for others to do so may suggest discrimination or prejudice.

The growth in identity politics such as gay rights and feminism has indicated a move away from political parties to single-issue politics in society.

Central to all the films mentioned above is the conflict created between the central character's need to follow their passion and the different forces which oppose it. As you know from the work on narrative, conflict is often central to a film's plot creating oppositions between characters which are worked through and – usually – resolved at the end.

ACTIVITY . . .

Select one of the films which you have chosen as having passion as a central theme and make notes on the following:

- What is the central passion explored in the film? Is it a passion for a person, a place, an art form, etc.?
- Is the reason for the passion explained?
- Are there any characters who try to prevent the central character from following their passion? If so who?
- What motivates these characters? Why do they want to prevent the pursuit of this passion? (Their reasons may be to do with religion, gender, age, race, class, etc.)
- How are the conflicts resolved at the end of the film? Are they?

This battle between the different characters in the film creates the narrative conflict.

Example: *Bend it like Beckham*

- The central passion is for football – although there are sub-plots about friendship and a love story.
- The passion for football is a way for Jesminder to express her identity as an independent young woman; football is used as a metaphor for Jesminder's desire to move away from the traditional culture of her parents.

- The characters who try to prevent Jesminder playing football are her parents and extended family.
- These characters are motivated by their views on religion and gender; as a British Asian girl Jesminder is expected to conform by becoming a wife and mother.
- The conflicts are resolved at the end when the parents realize how important football is to Jesminder or – to continue the use of football as a metaphor – they realize that they have to let their daughter live her own life rather than conform to other people's expectations. It is an upbeat and optimistic ending.

The conflicts evident in the above films (and probably in the ones you have chosen) and the obstacles which face the hero are some of the ways in which the messages and values of the films are constructed. For example the story of *Billy Elliot* (a working-class boy from a 'macho' community who wants to be a ballet dancer) suggests that traditional expectations about class and gender can be detrimental to individuals and society. This could be read as the messages and values of the film.

Conflicts are also the basis for the theme of repression in this topic area. By preventing Jesminder from playing football and Billy from dancing, the parents in these films repress their children and refuse to recognize their true identity.

KEY TERM

REPRESSION Repression is the process of being kept down by force (not always physical); it refers to the way that a person's right to freedom of expression whether politically, socially or culturally can be denied.

In psychoanalysis the term 'repression' has a different meaning. Freud defines repression as a defence mechanism. It is the way that individuals protect themselves from harmful but attractive desires (often sexual). According to Freud such desires can never be completely repressed but return, in the form of dreams for example.

FOCUS FILM: *BEAUTIFUL THING*

Beautiful Thing is the focus film chosen for this topic and the following section will suggest a process for analysing the film. It is important to remember that you will need to think about *Beautiful Thing* in comparison to your other chosen film for this topic rather than on its own.

The analysis of *Beautiful Thing* can be constructed in two sections:

1 An analysis of the film itself:

   - film language and film style;
   - narrative and genre;
   - representation of gender/sexuality, place and class.

2 The wider contexts which shape the film:

- British film industry (institutions);
- social/cultural/historical contexts of the themes explored in the film and the time the film was made (gay rights and legislation);
- New Queer Cinema.

It is important to integrate these approaches to analyse the way that the film uses a range of techniques – film language, soundtrack, representations, narrative structure, etc. – to construct messages and values. It is also important to consider the wider contexts which influenced the making of the film – limitations of budget, the need to find an audience, etc.

Both sections above develop skills and knowledge from other parts of the specification: Section 1 refers to FS1 and Section 2 to FS2, as well as introducing new approaches to the study of films. This development of links between the different parts of the specification is very important and you should get used to developing your ideas about films by linking together areas from different parts of the specification.

Beautiful Thing is the story of Jamie, a schoolboy living on the Thamesmead estate in London, and follows his life during one summer as he realizes he is in love with his friend Ste. It is a low budget (£1.5m) British film and it premièred at the London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival in 1996. It was funded by Channel Four (before it set up FilmFour as a film production arm) and took less than £0.5m at the UK box office. It is a category 'A' British film as defined by the British Film Institute. This means that it was produced in Britain with British money. The cast and crew are mainly British and the story reflects British subject matter. *Beautiful Thing* received positive reviews and was also released in the US where it took $1.5m at the box office.

- Do the above points about production and exhibition create expectations about the film?
- What do you think the film will look like?
- Do you expect it to be a comedy? A drama?
- What are these expectations based on? Is it to do with your ideas about British (rather than Hollywood) films?

ACTIVITY . . .

How would you research information about a film's budget and box office, cast and crew?

Find the entries for *My Summer of Love* on the following websites:

www.imdb.com
www.screenonline.org.uk
www.launchingfilms.com

Answer the following questions:

- What is the film about?

continued

- Which production companies produced the film?
- Was any public money used to finance the film? If so give details.
- What was the budget for the film?
- Who directed the film? What other films have they directed?
- Who wrote the screenplay?

Using the same websites, look up *Beautiful Thing* to research the writer of the film, Jonathan Harvey:

- Is it an adapted or an original screenplay?
- What else has Jonathan Harvey written (film, TV, theatre)? Can you see any similarities in themes and style with *Beautiful Thing*?

Before continuing with the analysis you will need to watch *Beautiful Thing*. The first time you watch it you should make a note of the following:

- the names and a brief description of the main characters;
- the main settings used;
- any themes of passion and repression in the film.

As your work on the film develops, you will need to watch particular sequences – and probably the whole film – again to prepare for your exam.

ANALYSIS OF THE OPENING OF THE FILM

The opening of a film is often a useful sequence to study because of the way it introduces key themes, setting and characters, and these can suggest the messages and values of the film.

Watch the pre-credit and credit sequence of *Beautiful Thing* which finishes with Jamie turning off the TV (3 minutes 40 seconds), and make notes on the following:

Film language

- Describe the type of shots used:
  - are they medium/long/close-ups, etc.?
  - are any extreme angles used?
  - are the shots long takes or average length?
- Describe the setting used:
  - what do the settings tell us about the characters?
  - is it a positive representation of place?
- Describe the music on the soundtrack:
  - is it upbeat, melancholy, pop or classical?

- what are the lyrics and what mood does the music create?
- is it the type of music you expect to hear as a soundtrack to this setting?

ACTIVITY . . .

Throughout the film, songs by the Mamas and Papas (whose lead singer, Mama Cass, is idolized by Jamie's neighbour, Leah) are used as a soundtrack to montage sequences. Watch these sequences to construct an analysis of the way that the music contributes to the meanings created in the film.

In *My Summer of Love*, very different music is used to represent class and character; after watching the entire film suggest particular scenes from the film where this is evident and which could be used in contrast to *Beautiful Thing*.

Narrative and genre

- Are there any clues to the narrative and genre of the film?
  - Consider character, setting, plot (so far).

Institutions

- From looking at this extract, how would you define the film as British?
- At this point in the film does it seem similar to any other British films (or TV series)?

KEY TERM

REALISM Realism is a visual style which is particularly associated with British cinema such as the British New Wave of the 1960s. It is an attempt to show the world as it really is and tends to concentrate on social and political issues and how these affect working-class characters. A realist style has its own codes and conventions (particular style of acting, lighting, dialogue, setting, plots, etc.) which the audience recognizes as realist.

Some British realist films for further research:

Saturday Night and Sunday Morning (Director: Karel Reisz, 1960)
Brassed Off (Director: Mark Herman, 1996)
Sweet Sixteen (Director: Ken Loach, 2002)
Last Resort (Director: Pavel Pawlikowski, 2000)

Summary analysis of the opening sequence of *Beautiful Thing*

Points to note in the opening sequence:

The opening of the film is structured around the journey of Jamie, the central character, after he leaves the school football match early and runs home. This journey allows the audience to understand something about character and place; it is a multi-cultural area with black, Asian and white characters introduced. There is humour in the relationships between the characters but already some tension is evident. As Jamie travels from the football pitch to home, the main setting of the Thamesmead estate is introduced and this is predominantly concrete spaces without any greenery. This type of setting – a council estate in a big city – is typical of a realist style in British cinema but *Beautiful Thing* does not just use a conventional realist style. The use of music and the appearance of a rainbow over the estate challenge the usual representations of working-class settings as repressive and a place the characters want to escape from. The use of the rainbow is an interesting point to use to debate a realist style – is it conceivable that there was a rainbow at the moment of filming and therefore this is an example of a realist style, or do you think the film maker is using the rainbow for expressive purposes?

The film language in this sequence is typical of the rest of the film – continuity editing with a predominance of medium shots or close-ups with static camera. There is also the use of hand-held camera which is a technique associated with realism and documentary, and Jamie's journey through the city is told through overhead (bird's eye view) shots. These shots, in combination with the music, tell the audience about Jamie's optimistic and independent spirit, which in turn suggests that this will be an uplifting film.

ACTIVITY . . .

Comparative analysis: *My Summer of Love*

Once you have completed your analysis of the opening sequence of *Beautiful Thing*, watch the opening sequence of *My Summer of Love*. What comparisons can you make between the two films? Use the headings above as a starting point for your comparative analysis. The different representations of England – the city and the country – are particularly noticeable.

BEAUTIFUL THING AND NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

The plot of *Beautiful Thing* revolves around the desires and passions of the main character Jamie and the supporting characters in the film.

Figure 15.1 *Scene from Beautiful Thing*
Source: C4 / RGA

Figure 15.2 *Scene from My Summer of Love*
Source: UK Film Council / BBC / The Kobal Collection

ACTIVITY . . .

Narrative and character in *Beautiful Thing*:

- Make a list of the main characters in the film and describe their passions and desires.

For example Sandra (Jamie's mum) wants to:

- manage her own pub;
- leave the Thamesmead estate;
- be a good mother (is worried that she's not);
- have a better standard of living.

- Once you've completed your lists consider the following:
  - Are the desires fulfilled by the end of the film?
  - Does the fulfilment of the desires suggest anything about the messages and values of the film? (For example, are the characters' choices seen as positive or negative in the film?)

MESSAGES AND VALUES: RESOLUTION IN *BEAUTIFUL THING*

The endings of films can function in different ways; in mainstream films we expect an ending to tidy up the plot of the film, to give us the answers to the questions raised in the story. Will the central couple finally get together? Who was the killer? Will the team of underdogs win the championship, and so on? These endings can be very satisfying to an audience, like the solution to a puzzle. Other endings can be more ambiguous, leaving the audience to wonder what will happen next to the characters. These types of endings are more commonly found in non-mainstream cinema or art cinema and have been referred to as 'open' endings.

KEY TERM

NON-MAINSTREAM/ALTERNATIVE/ART CINEMA Although these terms all have slightly different meanings they are often used interchangeably to refer to films which are produced outside of the major film studios – usually Hollywood. They refer to films which in terms of narrative structure (often open rather than closed endings), subject matter, film language, budget, etc. are different from mainstream film. In some cases filmmakers choose to work in this way as they oppose the style and messages and values of Hollywood cinema; in others filmmakers who start in this area move on to big budget films. These areas will be studied in more detail at A2.

A variation on this type of ending is found in contemporary genres such as horror and action films where the ending is left unresolved to allow for a sequel. As you can see, the kind of ending a film has is linked to the genre, narrative and institutional context. When watching different types of films we expect different types of endings; if we don't find out what happened at the end of a thriller we may feel cheated but a drama may work better with certain strands of the narrative left open – it may be too unrealistic to tie up all the loose ends. Such endings can be linked to the style of realism.

Points for discussion:

- What type of ending do you think is more realistic, an open or closed ending? Why?
- Should films be realistic? Can genre films ever reflect reality?

KEY TERM

NARRATIVE THEORY AND RESOLUTION When Film Studies was first developing as an academic subject in the 1960s and 1970s there was a suspicion amongst academics about popular, usually, genre films. Influenced by Marxist views of popular culture many theorists argued that genre films spoon-fed their audiences rather than letting the audience think for themselves. An example of this was the way that endings, or resolutions, of popular films explained everything, while other types of films and filmmakers, European, 'art' cinema, etc., often left the audience with unanswered questions.

Why does it matter whether the audience is given the answers in a film or questions are left open? Some theorists argued that what happens in the cinema (where most people watched films at this time) has an influence on audience behaviour in the 'real world'; if people get used to being told what to think they will not question society and their place in it. In other words, Hollywood was seen as part of a system which kept the masses in their place – poor, hard-working and unquestioning. These ideas are similar to the hypodermic theory in Media Studies – that the audience is injected with messages from popular culture and is unable to question them.

- Do you think there is still a division between popular/mainstream and art cinema? Consider:
  - Do these different types of films have different audiences?
  - Are some types of films considered 'better' than others? If so in what way? By whom?
- Would you define either *Beautiful Thing* or *My Summer of Love* as art cinema?

ANALYSIS OF THE FINAL SEQUENCE OF *BEAUTIFUL THING*

In the context of the discussion of realism and different types of endings, the final sequence of *Beautiful Thing* provides many points for analysis. The way that the different desires of each character and the conflict between them are treated in an ending is also indicative of the point of view of the filmmaker and the messages and values of the film. However this view can also be challenged by the audience who may not agree with the message.

Watch the closing sequence of *Beautiful Thing* (1 hour 21 minutes to the final credits, 3 minutes) and make notes on the following:

Film language

- Describe the type of shots used.
  - How are the shots and use of camera different from the opening sequence?
  - What does the use of camera in this sequence suggest about the emotions of the characters?
  - Do you think that the type of shots and editing used in a film can affect the audience response?
- Describe the mise en scène in this sequence.
  - How are elements of the mise en scène used in the opening referred to in the final sequence?
- Soundtrack.
  - The final sequence of the film continues the use of the Mamas and Papas' songs heard throughout the film. How do the lyrics reflect the themes of the film?

Narrative structure

- Conflicts and oppositions.
  - Which conflicts in the narrative are resolved in this sequence?
  - Which characters are ignored in the final sequence? Why is this?
- Resolution.
  - Is this an open or closed ending? (Are the problems set up in the narrative resolved at the end, or are we left to wonder what will happen next?) Is it a mixture of both?
  - Would you describe this as a realistic ending? Consider the following:
    - Can you imagine this happening in real life – if not, why not?
    - What would be a realistic ending for this film? Why do you think the filmmakers chose the conclusion they did?
    - Does the ending work in terms of the narrative, themes and style of the film? (Is it a logical ending?)

Messages and values

With reference to your previous analysis of film language and narrative consider the point of view of the film. What position do the filmmakers take on the central passion of the film; the relationship between Jamie and Ste? How is this evident in the resolution of the film? What does this suggest about the values of the film?

These ideas will be developed in the discussion of representation in *Beautiful Thing*.

ACTIVITY . . .

Comparative analysis: *My Summer of Love*

Compare the ending of *Beautiful Thing* to *My Summer of Love*. Are they different in terms of how much of the narrative is resolved? How are the messages and values of the film evident in the way the film is resolved?

How does the discussion of realism affect your understanding of this ending?

Is it a happy ending?

Messages and values: representation of gender and sexuality

In analysing the messages and values in *Beautiful Thing* the representation of gender and sexuality are central and need to be discussed together.

WHY DOES REPRESENTATION MATTER?

The concept of representation reveals that media texts are constructions; they re-present the world to the audience. Any media text, including film, is mediation, an interpretation of the world, produced for a variety of artistic, economic and social reasons.

Representations rely on the shared recognition of ideas, groups and places. However there can certainly be disagreement in the interpretation of representations – whether, for example, they are read as negative, positive, inaccurate or partial images – and it is the analysis of how and why these representations are constructed and received that is important.

One of the reasons that representations are important is that they may influence the way people think about a particular group etc.:

> [How] social groups are treated in cultural representation is part and parcel of how they are treated in life, that poverty, harassment, self-hate and discrimination (in housing, jobs, educational opportunity and so on) are shored up and instituted by representation.
>
> (Dyer 1993).

Figure 15.3 *Scene from Beautiful Thing*
Source: C4 / RGA

Figure 15.4 *Scene from My Summer of Love*
Source: UK Film Council / BBC / The Kobal Collection

- Are 'negative' representations responsible for the prejudicial treatment of a particular group (perhaps defined by sexuality, class, gender, race, etc.)?
- Can 'negative' representations be challenged by 'positive' ones, which will in turn change people's attitudes and behaviour?
- If representations do affect the way that we think about particular groups, what does that suggest about the film (and wider media) audience?

One of the notable aspects of *Beautiful Thing* is the representation of young gay men. In considering the nature of this representation you should keep in mind the above debates and also consider the social and political context of being a gay male (or female) in the late twentieth century. The following chronology provides one kind of context but you should also consider wider issues of representation across society such as news stories, TV drama, soap operas, sitcoms and other films.

Social and political contexts

NOTEBOX . . .

Selected chronology of gay rights and legislation

1957: the Wolfenden Committee publishes its report recommending the decriminalization of consensual homosexual acts between adult men (lesbianism has never been illegal).

1967: ten years after it was recommended, the Sexual Offences Act was passed in the United Kingdom allowing sex between two consenting men over the age of 21.

1969: Stonewall riots: when police raided a gay bar – the Stonewall Inn – in New York the customers resisted arrest, leading to a series of violent riots which spread across the city. The Stonewall riots were a catalyst for the gay rights movement in the US and beyond. The Gay Liberation Front was set up in response to these events.

1970: first US gay pride parade held in New York City.

1981: in the US the Moral Majority starts an anti-gay campaign. Norway becomes the first country in the world to enact a law to prevent discrimination against homosexuals.

1988: Section 28 passed in the UK. The aim of this legislation was to stop local authorities 'promoting' homosexual relationships. In practice this meant that council funding for books, plays, films, support groups, etc., which presented gay relationships as natural was banned.

1990: OutRage! formed in the UK.

1997: UK extends immigration rights to same-sex couples.

1998: in the US Matthew Shepard was murdered. His life story is the subject of the film *Boys Don't Cry*.

2000: Section 28 repealed in Scotland. Age of consent for homosexual sex made equal to that for heterosexual sex (16) in the United Kingdom.

2003: Section 28 repealed in the rest of the UK.

2004: same-sex marriage: in the United States, Massachusetts legalizes same-sex marriage. Eleven US states ban the practice after public referendums. The UK government passes a civil partnership law but same-sex marriage remains illegal. Pressure groups such as Stonewall continue to campaign for equal rights in this area.

2005: Governor of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger, announces he will veto proposals to allow same-sex marriages, blocking the bill which was passed by the state government. The first civil partnerships take place in the UK.

Links for further research: www.stonewall.org.uk, www.outrage.nabumedia.com

Does the knowledge of the political and social context of gay rights affect the meaning of the representations in *Beautiful Thing* and *My Summer of Love*? Could you interpret them as a political statement? Are the representations positive or negative – or is this a problematic idea in itself?

NOTEBOX . . .

Cultural context: film movement – New Queer Cinema

The production and distribution of *Beautiful Thing* was possible due to a more open attitude in society to gay issues but also because of the influence of an earlier movement in US cinema.

New Queer Cinema is the term given to a group of films which emerged in the US in the early 1990s. The films were examples of independent cinema and were first shown at film festivals – particularly the Sundance Film Festival founded by Robert Redford – from where many gained crossover distribution to a wider audience. These films had in common a central character who was on the margins of society – an outsider – usually due to their sexuality but issues such as race, gender, class and physical disability were also referred to. While there had been films which featured gay characters and storylines before, New Queer Cinema was different in that it rejected the idea of positive representations which would be acceptable to the heterosexual, mainstream audience and instead deliberately

attempted to shock and anger that audience. In a similar approach, the term 'queer' which had previously been used as a term of abuse was appropriated by some organizations and individuals and used as positive form of identification.

Some examples of New Queer Cinema (US):

Poison (Todd Haynes, 1991)
Go Fish (Rose Troche, 1994)
The Living End (Gregg Araki, 1993)

UK:

Looking for Langston (Isaac Julien, 1988)
Young Soul Rebels (Isaac Julien, 1991)

Figure 15.5 *Scene from Beautiful Thing*
Source: C4 / RGA

Analysis of key sequence: representation of gender and the 'coming of age' film

The third sequence for analysis is when Ste stays the night at Jamie's flat after a row with his family, and they have a discussion in Jamie's bedroom (22 minutes–24 minutes).

This sequence is important because it develops the themes of gender expectations and sexuality as well as showing the increased closeness between Jamie and Ste. It is a quiet, intimate scene with none of the noise and clutter of the rest of the film.

KEY TERM

GENDER AND SEX Gender and sex are often used interchangeably but there are important differences:

Sex refers to the biological differences between men and women. Sex is fixed and does not change over time; it is the same across countries and across cultures, while gender is often different.

Gender refers to the social differences between men and women, girls and boys. These are the expectations that society has about men and women's roles and responsibilities. These gender expectations will change over time and will be different in different countries and amongst different cultures.

KEY TERM

GENDER IDENTITY The study of representations of gender is important partly because gender is a political issue: Feminism is a social movement that questions gender inequalities and tries to change them, hoping to achieve gender equality, particularly in relation to work and pay. Part of the campaign for equal opportunities relied on pointing out the way that gender expectations prevent equality – and affect men as well as women.

After watching the sequence make notes on the following:

- Describe the mise en scène of the sequence. What does it tell us about the two boys and their characters? (Remember that mise en scène includes composition and figure placement.)
- What signifiers of gender are used (visual and through dialogue) in the sequence? Are these conventionally seen as masculine or feminine?
- Describe the use of shots and editing in the sequence. How does this style of film language contribute to the atmosphere of the sequence?
- There are three other sequences in the film which take place in the bedroom – two between Jamie and Ste and one between Jamie and his mother after they've had a row. Look at these scenes again:
    - What is the function of each of the sequences in the overall structure of the film? (Consider how plot and character are developed in each sequence.)
    - How are the themes of the film developed across the three sequences?
    - From looking at these sequences, what do you think is the filmmaker's view of Jamie and Ste's relationship? What evidence do you have for this?

ACTIVITY . . .

Representation

The representation of gender is only one of a range of representations which can be studied in *Beautiful Thing* and should be developed to include an analysis of Sandra. Other important areas to look at include the representation of the *family*, of *place* and of *class*.

- What key sequences would you choose to illustrate these three areas from the film?
- In *My Summer of Love* the central protagonists are female – how do they conform to or subvert (go against) gender expectations?
- Can you see any similarities between Mona and Jamie?

The conversation between Jamie and Ste about their responses to the world around them is typical of a type of narrative which has been defined as the 'coming of age' film and it is interesting to place *Beautiful Thing* in this context (one which has been more often associated with Hollywood cinema). The 'coming of age' film is often a sub-genre of the teen movie, although there are examples across a range of genres. It isn't a discrete genre but there are some recognizable codes and conventions:

Conventions of the 'coming of age' film

- The coming of age is a period of transition from 'childhood' to 'adulthood' which is characterized by the need to make decisions about the future – to do with family, friends, education, work, sexuality, etc.
- The time scale for taking these important decisions is often a short period – such as a summer.
- 'Coming of age' films tend to rely on dialogue and emotion rather than physical action.
- The actual age of the central character can vary, but tends to be around mid-teen.
- The story is often told in flashback by the central character who is now older and wiser.
- The central character is usually male.

NOTEBOX . . .

Discussion points

- What 'coming of age' films have you seen? Include British and US films.
- Who do you think is the audience for these films? Why do you think they have remained so popular?
- Would you define *Beautiful Thing* and *My Summer of Love* as 'coming of age' films? Do the conventions apply to both films?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER WORK

Alternative comparative films:

My Beautiful Laundrette (Stephen Frears, 1985)
The Crying Game (Neil Jordan, 1992)
Young Soul Rebels (Isaac Julien, 1991)
Wilde (Brian Gilbert, 1997)
Get Real (Simon Shore, 1998)
Scandal (Michael Caton-Jones, 1989)
Wish You Were Here (David Leland, 1987)

In constructing an analysis of your chosen films, consider:

- What are the main themes of the film?
- What conflicts are evident in the narrative? Which are resolved?
- What type of film language is used?
- Which representations are the most important in the film and why?
- How are the messages and values linked to the representations?
- What information can you find out about the political and/or social context of the film?

To provide evidence for your analysis of the film, you need to choose key sequences which illustrate your points. These should be chosen to reflect the themes and the film language.

EXAMPLE EXAM QUESTIONS

Make reference to at least two films, one of which must be a *focus* film.

1 Is the social world in which the characters live represented as a significant influence on key characters' passions or repressions?

2 How are the emotions and experiences of the characters in the films you have studied communicated through sound and image?

16 SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONFLICT

In this chapter we look at:

- representations of the state and state power (specifically the government and the army);
- representations of the 'enemies' of the state (who defines who they are?);
- forms of opposition to authority (such as demonstrations, protests) and how these are dealt with (questions of justice);
- national identity: inclusion and exclusion, who is defined as British and who isn't and by whom;
- conflict at the community/family level; particularly generational and religious conflict;
- the social and political contexts of the events of *Bloody Sunday*.

Focus film:	*Bloody Sunday* (Paul Greengrass, 2002)
Suggested comparative film:	*In the Name of the Father* (Jim Sheridan, 1994)

As with the previous topic 'passions and repressions', the 'social and political conflict' topic is centred on the idea of oppositions in story and plot. To begin with it is important therefore to define what is meant by the term 'social and political conflict'. There is likely to be some overlap with the themes in 'passions and repressions'. However, that topic emphasizes personal expressions of desire and identity while this area is more explicitly concerned with organized groups in political and social contexts. The different areas of conflict at family, community, national and state level are likely to be interlinked.

NOTEBOX . . .

British cinema and class

Representations of class and class conflict have been a central theme in British cinema history. Definitions of British cinema as a national cinema often include a preoccupation with class, particularly in the realist films of the 1960s and the costume dramas of the late 1980s and 1990s.

Listed below are some recent British films with social and political conflict as a central theme:

Gosford Park (Robert Altman, 2002)

Gosford Park is set in the 1930s in an English country house. It deals with the lives of a group of aristocrats, who have gathered for the weekend, and the servants who look after them and the house. The central conflict is one of *class division* between those 'above and below stairs' but there are also the hierarchies within the different groups; the housekeeper is of a higher status than the cook, etc.

My son the fanatic (Prasad, 1997)

(This is currently a close study film for this unit and could be studied as an extension of this topic area.)

This film deals with several social conflicts and is a good example of the way these conflicts intertwine. The central character is Parvez, an immigrant who lives in Bradford and has integrated into British society. Farid, his son is a student who rejects the values of Western society and becomes a Muslim fundamentalist. The conflicts include those between the different generations and between religions. The film also raises questions of national identity – who is defined as British and who is not.

The representation of these conflicts is one of the ways that the messages and values of the films are constructed by the filmmaker and interpreted by the audience. Which other British films can you add which deal with conflict? Which different conflicts are represented?

ACTIVITY . . .

Discussion point

- Which social and political conflicts do you think are particularly relevant to contemporary British society? You might consider race, religion, laws. Try to give examples for each.
- Do you think British films should represent these issues?
- Does Hollywood cinema represent contemporary conflicts?

Both the chosen films in this topic area deal with the politics of Northern Ireland and particularly the conflict between Irish Republicans and the British government. This is a complex area with a long history – and a still changing present with peace negotiations – but it is important to have some understanding of the wider contexts of the events depicted.

FOCUS FILM: *BLOODY SUNDAY*

ACTIVITY . . .

Read the following summaries of the two films:

Bloody Sunday

On 30 January 1972, 13 civilians were shot dead by the British army while taking part in a civil rights march against internment in the Bogside area of Derry (also known as Londonderry).

In the Name of the Father

In the early 1970s, four Irishmen and women were wrongly convicted by a British court of the bombing of a pub in Guildford, in which civilians died, and of being members of the IRA.

As a start to researching this area find out the following (remember there may be conflicting points of view evident in some of the answers):

- What is meant by the term 'civil rights'? What examples of other civil rights movements are there in history?
- What is internment and how was it used in Northern Ireland?
- Why was the British army in Northern Ireland in the 1970s?
- Why is Derry also referred to as Londonderry? Which groups refer to it by which name?
- What do the initials IRA stand for? What is their main political aim?

For further information about the situation in Ireland and its history see: www.bbc.co.uk/history/war/troubles/origins.

Having read the summaries and completed some research into Irish politics make a list of what you think will be the main conflicts dealt with in the two films.

NOTEBOX . . .

Civil rights movements

Sharpeville and Amritsar

In the emotional final speech of *Bloody Sunday* the central character, Ivan Cooper, refers to the bloody Sunday shootings as 'our Sharpeville, our Amritsar'.

The Amritsar massacre was a defining part of the struggle for Indian independence from British rule and took place on 13 April, 1919, a Sikh festival. Mass protests against the Rowlatt Act, a series of repressive measures passed by the British, started peacefully but soon became violent. In Amritsar, where leaders of the Indian Independence movement had been arrested, the British army declared 'No gatherings of persons or processions of any sort will be allowed. All gatherings will be fired on'. When thousands of unarmed people protested in the centre of Amritsar the order was given to fire without warning and at least 400 people were killed and 1,200 injured.

In the town of Sharpeville in 1960, 69 black South Africans were killed and 180 injured by the South African police force during a protest against the 'pass laws'. Introduced in 1923 the pass laws were part of the apartheid system (rule by the minority whites over the black majority) of racial control and prevented black South Africans from leaving their 'homelands' to move to the cities. The Sharpeville Massacre as it became known caused international condemnation of both the event itself and the wider context of the apartheid system of government in South Africa.

POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXTS

Bloody Sunday is a British and Irish co-production with funding from a range of sources including private and public money; this is a common institutional context for British films. The dominant partner is Granada Film, part of the commercial TV production and distribution company which is the primary producer for ITV; it also distributes programmes internationally. Shortly after the release of *Bloody Sunday*, Granada Film was closed as an independent film company and merged with Granada's comedy and drama department when Granada decided to concentrate on TV rather than film production. This means that the BBC is now the only British broadcaster with a separate film production arm. One of the other producers – Hell's Kitchen Films is an Irish company set up in 1992 by Jim Sheridan, the director of *In the Name of the Father*. In addition to money from commercial organizations, public funding through lottery money was also received from the Film Council.

Bloody Sunday was first broadcast on ITV as part of the thirtieth anniversary commemoration of the march, it also coincided with the findings of the Saville Report, an independent enquiry which was set up in 1998. *Bloody Sunday* was a very controversial film and was criticized for bias towards the marchers and against the army. Another film about these events, *Sunday* (Jimmy McGovern), was shown on Channel 4 at the same time; both films were followed by studio discussions about how accurate the portrayal of events was and wider debates about the future of the conflict.

Bloody Sunday also received a limited cinema release in Britain, the US (where it was shown on two screens) and across Europe. It was premièred at a London cinema on the same night that it was shown on television and this meant that it was ineligible

Figure 16.1 *Scene from Bloody Sunday*
Source British Film Institute

for an Oscar nomination. The film did receive two prestigious awards; Best Film at the Berlin Film Festival and the Audience Award at Sundance. The lead actor, James Nesbitt, had previously been associated with comedy roles and his performance as the MP Ivan Cooper was seen as a successful breakthrough into 'serious' acting.

NOTEBOX . . .

British cinema and television

The relationship between film and TV in Britain is very close in a variety of ways:

- drama on TV and in film often use a similar realist aesthetic;
- film and TV programmes often deal with similar social issues to do with life in Britain today;
- TV series are used as the basis for cinema spin-offs ('The League of Gentleman', 'Kevin and Perry Go Large', etc.)
- TV companies fund filmmaking;
- TV is an important form of exhibition for British films.

Yasmin (2004) another possible focus film for this unit, had a cinema release in France but was only shown at the London Film Festival in this country with its main exhibition platform being Channel 4.

Figure 16.2 *In the Name of the Father*
Source Universal / The Kobal Collection / Jonathan Hessian

In the Name of the Father is a similarly controversial film. It was one of a group of Irish films made in the 1990s which dealt with the wider contexts of the fight for Irish independence. These films include: *The Crying Game* (Neil Jordan, 1992), *Nothing Personal* (Thaddeus O'Sullivan, 1995), *Michael Collins* (Neil Jordan, 1996), *Some Mother's Son* (Terry George, 1996). The directors of these films have become internationally known and work in Hollywood as well as Ireland; Terry George, the writer of *In the Name of the Father*, directed *Hotel Rwanda* in 2004.

ACTIVITY . . .

Research the institutional context of *In the Name of the Father*:

List the different production companies involved in the making of the film:

- Are there any similarities with the funding of *Bloody Sunday*?
- What nationality are the different companies?
- Would you define *In the Name of the Father* as an Irish film, a British film, or an American film? Give evidence for your answer.

Before continuing with the analysis you will need to watch *Bloody Sunday* and *In the Name of the Father*. The first time you watch them you should make a note of the following:

- the names and a brief description of the main characters;
- the main settings used;
- any conflicts between individuals, groups, countries, etc., in the film.

FILM LANGUAGE: THE DOCUDRAMA

Bloody Sunday is based on real, and contentious, events. Rather than create a fictionalized account, the filmmakers used the technique of docudrama: a hybrid form which mixes the film language style of documentary and drama.

NOTEBOX . . .

History of the docudrama

Docudrama is a relatively recent form. One of the first examples was *Cathy Come Home* (Ken Loach, 1966) a film made for television with the specific aim of highlighting the problem of homelessness in Britain. Docudrama is currently a very popular television genre with examples such as *Out of Control* (Dominic Savage, 2002), an improvised film about young offenders and *The Navigators* (Ken Loach, 2001) about the privatization of the British rail network. Both of these received limited cinema release. One of the most influential figures in this area is Jimmy McGovern whose work is explicitly political; *Hillsborough* (1997), *Dockers* (1999), *Sunday* (2002).

Docudrama is a controversial form precisely because of its technique of dramatizing real events. Some documentary makers are particularly critical of the form, seeing it as a corruption of the traditional documentary representation of real events. At first documentary and drama may seem to be opposing forms: the documentary is a non-fiction form based on real events and uses techniques such as interviews and a voice-over to impart information about the real world. Drama is a fictional form which uses techniques such as acting, editing, lighting, etc. to make the audience forget they are watching a film and provide a form of escapism. In fact it can be very difficult to define the difference between drama, docudrama and documentary – although we tend to know it when we see it. Read the following summaries of two films. Which form do you think they belong to?

Film 1

A single mother who is accused of child neglect, battles social services to be allowed to keep her existing children and her unborn child.

Film 2

Two friends have an accident while mountaineering in Peru. To save his own life, one of the men cuts the rope which is holding his friend, knowing that this will result in his friend's death. In fact the friend survives and although very badly injured he struggles back to base camp where the two men are reunited.

Both of these stories could be told in any of the forms suggested, although the first is *Ladybird, Ladybird* (Ken Loach, 1993), a fiction film, while the second is the documentary *Touching the Void* (Kevin Macdonald, 2003). Further complications arise when we take into account the fact that *Ladybird, Ladybird* was based on real events and uses non-actors while *Touching the Void* uses reconstructions in which real people are played by actors.

Another reason that definitions in this area are so complicated is that documentary is not one single style but a range of styles. Three popular styles of documentary are the classic or expository, the performative and the observational. While there are overlaps in these styles they do have recognizable codes and conventions. The first uses traditional techniques of interviews and voice-over which explains the events to the viewer. Performative is a recent form where the documentary maker becomes part of the film, appearing on screen and giving their reaction to events; Michael Moore (*Bowling for Columbine*, 2002) and Morgan Spurlock (*Super Size Me*, 2004) are performative documentary makers. Observational documentary is in some ways very different from these two forms as there is no voice-over or interviews and the filmmaker is never seen or heard. This form is sometimes referred to as 'fly on the wall' and this suggests that its aim is to see everything as it happens, to let events unfold naturally without any disruption or intervention from the filmmaker. To achieve this, observational documentaries use a specific film language which includes hand-held camera and long takes. It is this style which is most commonly found in docudrama. The influence of this style can be seen in popular TV genres such as reality TV and docusoap, hybrid forms which also challenge traditional definitions of documentary. Some recent examples of observational documentaries include: *Être et Avoir* (France, Nicholas Philbert, 2002) and *Dark Days* (US, Marc Singer, 2000).

ACTIVITY . . .

Discussion point

Do you think it is ever possible for a documentary accurately to reflect reality?
Does the process of filming and editing fundamentally alter the event being recorded?
Can a documentary ever be objective?

If you continue Film Studies at A2 you can continue the work on documentary at FS6 which is the synoptic module drawing together a range of areas studied on the course.

KEY TERM

FREE CINEMA, DIRECT CINEMA, CINÉMA VÉRITÉ (TRUTH) These three documentary movements of the 1950s and 1960s, from Britain, the US and France respectively, are all examples of the development of observational documentary styles. These movements were interested in finding new ways of telling stories in film, thus creating a new film language as well as presenting new subject matter.

Some examples of films from these movements:

Mama Don't Allow (UK, Richardson and Reisz, 1956), about working-class youth culture, particularly jazz and dancing.

Every Day Except Christmas (UK, Anderson, 1957),which follows people who work at Billingsgate Fish Market in London.

The filmmakers involved in Free Cinema went on to make some of the most influential social realist fiction films in the 1960s.

High School (US, Fred Wiseman, 1969), follows the lives of American High School students.

Don't Look Back (US, Chris Hedegus and D. A. Pennebaker, 1965), a record of the singer Bob Dylan's tour of Britain.

One important characteristic that the documentary and drama forms do have in common is the reliance on storytelling, the shaping of events into a coherent structure.

REAL EVENTS AND NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

Although *Bloody Sunday* is based on real events, the filmmakers have to construct a watchable, interesting story from these events in the same way that the makers of fiction-based films do. As with any fiction film, *Bloody Sunday* uses narrative devices such as identification with a hero, oppositions and conflict between groups and the build-up of tension to construct the story.

Bloody Sunday uses a chronological narrative structure with the events taking place on one day; this means that there is a close link between story and plot.

- How are the story events organized in *In the Name of the Father*?
- Why do you think this particular organization is used? Does it affect the way the audience reacts to Gerry Conlan?

Another example of narrative techniques used in drama and documentary is exposition. Exposition refers to the 'facts' of the story, whether in fiction or non-fiction. It is the

explanation of plot, character and setting and is there to aid the audience's understanding. In the opening of *Bloody Sunday* Ivan Cooper's speech to the press is a form of exposition.

MESSAGES AND VALUES: IDENTIFICATION AND REPRESENTATION IN *BLOODY SUNDAY*

There are several areas of representation which are central to analysing the messages and values of the film. These representations are constructed through the use of:

- identification with character;
- film language and film style.

The main groups of people represented are:

- the civil rights marchers;
- the British army (the Parachute Regiment).

Other areas of representation would include:

- the IRA;
- the people of Derry who don't march;
- the city of Derry itself.

Identification in film

What is meant by the term identification? Identification is a crucial component in film – and all storytelling forms – as it is the way that a spectator is able to place themselves 'in' the film, to understand what motivates the different characters. It also allows the filmmaker to control our response and to help us become engaged with the film; if we don't care about the characters it is hard to remain interested. We don't just identify with the 'good' characters in a film. Part of the excitement of watching a thriller can come from our identification with the villain, and it is common to shift our identification from character to character during a film.

To identify with a character we need to 'see what they see' and this can be achieved through a combination of aspects of film construction:

- Time on screen: if a character hardly appears in a film it is difficult to understand their motivation; the hero of a film tends to appear in the majority of the scenes.
- Actions and motivations: understanding what the character is feeling and why they act in the way that they do – this is a function of the narrative.
- Dialogue: how does the way the character speaks and what they say reveal their personality?
- The use of point of view shots literally place us in the position of the character – to 'see what they see', but this on its own will not create identification without the previous techniques.

In *Bloody Sunday* the use of identification is a vital tool in communicating the messages and values of the film – specifically who the filmmaker believes to be responsible for

the events of Bloody Sunday. Using the above points, analyse the following two sequences from the film to consider the use of identification.

Sequence analysis: identification and representation

The manipulation of audience identification is part of the way that the representations in the film are created. Looking at the following sequence, analyse the way that identification is created with Ivan Cooper and how this affects the representation of the civil rights marchers – and the British army.

Analysis of extract: 10.45 minutes–14.31 minutes

This extract is part of the build-up to the march and follows Ivan Cooper, the local MP as he tries to encourage people to join the march. Watch the extract carefully and make notes on the following:

- Which character has the most screen time in this sequence? Is this typical of the film as a whole?
- At the start of the sequence we see Ivan with his parents – what does this tell us about his character? Why do you think this scene was included?
- Make a note of Ivan's dialogue – who does he speak to? What tone of voice does he use? What does he say?
- How does the sequence help you understand Ivan's motivation – his reasons for organizing the march?
- The casting of James Nesbitt, a familiar, and handsome, face, is very important. What effect do you think this casting has on the way the audience reacts to the character?

NOTEBOX . . .

Sunday Bloody Sunday and *The Magnificent Seven*

When Ivan Cooper walks past the cinema we can clearly see the two films which are showing:

Sunday Bloody Sunday (Schlesinger, 1972) was a drama which had just been released; its storyline about a romantic triangle has no connection to the events of Bloody Sunday. The use of the title therefore, seems to be a comment on the events we watch unfolding. Of course it is only the audience who can see the link between the title of the film showing at the local cinema and what is about to happen in Derry; Ivan is oblivious. This gap between what the audience knows and what the character knows suggests that identification isn't always created through just 'seeing what the character sees'.

The Magnificent Seven (Sturges, 1960) has a much clearer link in terms of plot in which seven gunmen defend a Mexican village from bandits. However the film had actually been released twelve years before *Bloody Sunday*.

Once you have completed your notes write them up into a character study of Ivan. What does this suggest about the representation of the marchers and the point of view of the filmmakers?

- The British army is also represented in this scene. Analyse the representation of the soldiers through reference to screen time, dialogue, motivation and interaction with other characters.

Whenever you analyse a sequence from a film you need to include reference to the film language:

- Describe the use of camera, the editing, and the soundtrack. Are different groups in the sequence filmed in different ways? Is the use of film language linked to the representation of those groups?
- What techniques from documentary forms are evident in this sequence?

Figure 16.3 *Scene from Bloody Sunday*
Source British Film Institute

Summary analysis

The sequence is structured around the immediate build-up to the march and clearly sets up the conflicting points of views of Ivan Cooper and the Parachute Regiment. It is also an important plot point in the film as it sets up motivation for the killings on the part of the army and the innocence, perhaps naiveté, of Ivan Cooper. In order to communicate these points to the audience, the filmmaker has used different types of film language to represent the different groups as well as creating contrasts through the editing.

The sequence starts with Ivan talking to his parents. They are filmed in their kitchen, which is a realist mise en scène; the tone of the scene is warm and humorous. Ivan's mother still speaks to him as if he were a young boy and he jokes to her in an affectionate way. (The humorous dialogue concerns religion. Later in the sequence Ivan makes a joke about being a Protestant, and this is perhaps done to indicate that Ivan is not motivated by religious extremism which might make him less appealing to an audience.) Ivan reassures his mother that the march will be 'just a Sunday afternoon stroll', a comment which the audience, with their knowledge about the events to come, interprets ironically. This scene was filmed in one take and this technique is continued as Ivan goes into the street; the camera is hand-held and shaky and the shot lasts for about 40 seconds. These are techniques borrowed from observational documentary and are used to give the scene authenticity. The realism is also enhanced by the breaking of some of the 'rules' of filmmaking: characters have their backs to the camera; they move in and out of frame; people mumble and talk over each other. As Ivan walks along the street the film language emphasizes his determination and purposefulness; he is always on the move, always busy. He seems to know many of his constituents by name and is warm and funny in his dealing with them. From this scene of movement and long shots of the street setting, the film cuts to the Parachute Regiment, also preparing for the march. Now the film language is far more static; the group is shot in close up and it is hard to differentiate between them; they are represented as a mass rather than individuals with particular characteristics. This style creates the image of an isolated group which is not part of the community of Derry. The dialogue is crucial in providing an explanation for what happens on the march; the soldiers refer to the marchers as 'hooligans' and there is an order for the soldiers to show 'maximum aggression and make lots of arrests' before the march has even begun.

This sequence is typical of the organization of events in the rest of the film as it cuts between Ivan Cooper and the marchers and the British army, using film language and dialogue to emphasize the differences between the two. This is a successful way of creating identification with one side of the conflict against another.

A useful comparison with this scene is the one which comes very near the end of the film and echoes the earlier sequence.

Analysis of extract: 1 hour 22 minutes–1 hour 26 minutes

This sequence takes place in the hospital after the march and shows Ivan Cooper trying to find out the extent of the tragedy.

Watch the sequence and make notes on the following:

- What similarities are there between the two sequences?
- How is the character of Ivan represented differently in this sequence?
- How does our identification with Ivan affect our reaction to this sequence?

What you will have noticed is the way that the structure of the two sequences is very similar, cutting from scenes of Ivan and the marchers to the soldiers.

- What effect does the cutting between the two groups have on the representation of each?

These two sequences, one from the beginning, the other from near the end of the film, chart the development of Ivan's character. A third sequence to study to develop your analysis of representation and identification is the final sequence, when Ivan is addressing a press conference and a list of the dead is read out.

ACTIVITY . . .

Using the approaches outlined above write a detailed analysis of this sequence which discusses the:

- representation of Ivan and the civil rights marchers;
- representation of the British army.

and

- how the construction of audience identification with character affects audience reaction to the events.

As a comparative sequence to this one you could look at the opening sequence which also involves a press conference. This mirroring of the opening in the ending is a fairly common narrative device and gives a sense of completion and balance to the story. This idea is linked to the concept of resolution discussed in the previous topic. Do you think there are other issues to consider about resolution when the story is based on real events?

- Choose two other sequences from the film which seem to 'mirror' each other in the way described above. Why has the film been structured in this way? How does it help communicate the messages of the film?

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: *IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER*

Representation and identification in *In the Name of the Father*

Watch the opening sequence of *In the Name of the Father* and make notes on the following:

- Which different characters are introduced and what do we find out about them?
- Describe the relationship between Gerry Conlon and his father.
- How is the city of Belfast represented in this sequence?

A range of conflicts are introduced in this sequence between people, groups and places, for example, the conflict between Irish and British life:

The Irish are represented as traditional, family centred and religious with a sense of community. The British are viewed with suspicion by Gerry's parents as they are seen as having rejected the values which are important to them; such as family, 'there's no family life there', and religion. Another way of expressing this would be to say that the Irish are associated with tradition, the British with modernity. This of course is one of the reasons that Gerry wants to go to London.

For each of the other conflicts introduced write a similar list of characteristics.

Representations of the British and Irish

In *Bloody Sunday*, the political conflict between the Irish civil rights marchers and the British state is central to the film's narrative. In this film, Britain is represented by the army; the creation of identification means that we care more about the marchers than the army. In *In the Name of the Father* there are two central conflicts; one between the Guildford Four and the British state, the other between Gerry and his father.

ACTIVITY . . .

You are going to prepare a presentation to other members of your group on the two main conflicts in *In the Name of the Father*. For this you will need to:

- select one or two sequences which illustrate the conflict between the Guildford Four and the British;
- and one or two which illustrate the conflict between Gerry and his father.

(The total running time should be between 8–10 minutes.)

For each of your examples write an analysis for presentation which explains:

- how the audience identifies with one side of the conflict over another;
- what effect this has on the political message of the film;
- how the use of film language is linked to the audience reaction (plot, character, dialogue, camera, etc.).

continued

It is also important to consider whether there are any other ways of looking at the conflicts. For example, do all the British and Irish characters fit into each side easily?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER WORK

Alternative comparative films:

The Crying Game (Neil Jordan, 1992) and *Angel* (Neil Jordan, 1982) both deal with the conflicts arising from the struggle for Irish independence.

The Navigators (Ken Loach, 2000): this docudrama uses the privatization of the railways and the policies of New Labour to examine a range of social and political conflicts.

Yasmin (Beaufoy, 2004) and *Dirty Pretty Things* (Frears, 2002) look at the social conflicts which develop in a multiracial society, focusing on questions of national identity.

In this World (Winterbottom, 2003) and *Last Resort* (Pawlikovski, 2000) both use realist techniques to examine the lives of refugees and the conflicts arising from fears of 'invasion'.

To construct an analysis of the representations of conflict in your chosen film, you need to choose key sequences which illustrate your points. These should be chosen to reflect the themes and the film language.

EXAMPLE EXAM QUESTIONS

1 How do the filmmakers use sound and image to create the violence of conflict in the films you have studied?

2 Discuss some of the ways in which the filmmaker represents social and/or political conflicts in the films you have studied.

▼ 17 SCOTTISH CINEMA

This chapter will look at:

- the content and contexts of the focus films;
- what is distinct and different about Scottish cinema;
- a range of textual and contextual issues surrounding Scottish cinema.

Focus films:	*Local Hero* (Enigma/Goldcrest 1983, Director: Bill Forsyth)
	Orphans (Downtown/Channel 4 1999, Director: Peter Mullan)
Suggested comparison films:	*Another Time, Another Place* Cinegate/Umbrella/Rediffusion/ Channel 4/Scottish Arts Council 1983, Director: Michael Radford)
	Small Faces (Guild/BBC/Glasgow Film Fund/Skyline 1995, Director: Gillies MacKinnon)
	Morvern Callar (Momentum/Alliance Atlantis/BBC/Company 2002, Director: Lynne Ramsay)

This topic area looks at films made in Scotland or about Scotland, from Bill Forsyth's *That Sinking Feeling* (Glasgow Youth Theatre/LakeFilms/Minor Miracle Film Co-op 1979) to the present day, and encompasses the opportunity to study particular genres of Scottish film, and to explore broader representational issues that underpin the films in this period, such as the filmic construction of Scotland, social issues, the rural and

the urban, and the concept of a constructed 'Scottishness'. This distinct and exciting national cinema existing within a broader context of British (as opposed to English) cinema directly engages with a number of diverse issues that can be studied in terms of *Messages and Values* including:

- Scottish genres – comedy, crime, and the pastoral: how Scottish film positions itself to an audience;
- national identity – how defining Scotland and 'Scottishness' underpins much of the work in this period;
- class, regional identity, sexuality, and gender representation – how groups within Scottish society are depicted and how this representation evolves;
- social and political institutions – how Scotland and the Scots shape their society and react to outside agents;
- production context – the films of this period in relation to a broader context of Scottish film (both fiction and non-fiction), of funding schemes, and the context of key filmmakers.

LOCAL HERO – SUMMARY

Local Hero was written and directed by Bill Forsyth, who by 1983 had already won acclaim both with his preceding low budget works *That Sinking Feeling* (1979) and *Gregory's Girl* (Lake/NFFC/STV, 1981), and with his work as a producer for BBC Scotland. The film had the backing of Lord (David) Puttnam's Goldcrest Productions (then one of the most significant players on the British scene), giving Forsyth the opportunity not only to ramp up production values on his previous films, but also to engage Hollywood legend Burt Lancaster to play the head of an American oil company.

The film was made at a time of deepening social unrest in Britain (and Scotland in particular) as the right-wing agenda of Margaret Thatcher's government saw rising unemployment and the destruction of traditional industries including the mines, shipyards, and fishing that had been central to Scottish life for several generations. Oil, which had been seen as Scotland's saviour on its discovery had not produced the benefits predicted for Scotland, and, in a historically socialist Scotland, there was a growing suspicion of foreign capitalists in general, and more specifically oil companies.

The film tells the story of Mac (Peter Riegert), who works as a junior manager at Knox Oil (an American company) who is sent to a small Scottish coastal town with the mission of buying it up so Knox Oil can tear it down to build a refinery on the site. However, once Mac arrives in Ferness he begins to see the virtues of the town: the simplicity and pace of life there and its contrast to his corporate life back in Houston, Texas. Although the majority of the locals are keen to sell up to Knox Oil and move away from what they see as a barren, dying way of life, Mac becomes increasingly fond of the town, wanting to settle there and forget the business world and his career. All is not simple however, and when Ben (Fulton Mackay) a villager with his own agenda, threatens to delay or even negate the sale, it looks like both the villagers and corporate America will join together to crush him, with Mac forced to take sides in the fight. The building tensions and in-fighting are dissolved when Happer, the head of Knox Oil (Burt

Figure 17.1 *Local Hero*
Source British Film Institute

Lancaster) arrives in presidential style by helicopter, and recognizes the innate beauty and value of Ferness, resolving to build an observatory in the town rather than an oil refinery (he is a keen stargazer and there has been a running theme of Mac reporting back to him regularly on the night sky). The locals return to their lives, Happer returns to his business, and Mac leaves for Houston and his empty corporate life, with his glossy but empty apartment where, in remembering Ferness, he is forced to admit his own emptiness.

The film however is not as clear cut as it may seem, as the representations are illusions, with the idyllic Scottish landscape being cut through by an RAF fighter on a training flight (a political issue of the time), Mac not having any Scottish ancestry despite having been sent to Ferness because of a presumed Scottish ancestry, and the happy simple population seeing their own lives as desolate and in decay. Forsyth plays with both representations and the very concept of representation.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Look at the sequence in *Local Hero* where Mac arrives in Ferness. What values are being expressed both by him and by the townspeople?

continued

- There is a distinct 'look' to the film that shapes audience response. What message(s) do you feel that Bill Forsyth was trying to express with this style?
- How does the director convey the changing beliefs of Mac? Are there specific moments where decisions are made?
- Mac is deliberately positioned as an outsider: discuss with peers what effect this positioning would have on an audience in terms of messages and values. Do you think his being American and representing a big corporation is a tool for delivering a message? Make Mac Scottish and have him working for a Scottish oil company – does this change the messages and values of the film in any way?
- Write out a timeline for Mac's journey and mark on it the points where he makes decisions that reflect his changing character. Do these change points coincide with any key story moments? If so, how do they combine and what message or value is expressed?
- When Gordon Urquhart informs Victor that the local population is going to be rich he adds 'We won't have anywhere to call home, but we'll be stinkin' rich.' and Victor later tells Mac 'It's their place, Mac. They have a right to make of it what they can. Besides, you can't eat scenery!' What messages and values about the local population do these lines express? Are there any other key lines that develop these views?
- Investigate the political and economic contexts of the time. How well do you feel *Local Hero* represents its time?
- Who is the local hero and just how local is he? Do you think Forsyth was being ironic with his title?

ORPHANS – SUMMARY

Orphans was the directorial debut of Peter Mullan, a jobbing actor who appears in many of Scotland's best films in this period, and who used his acting fees to support him whilst he wrote scripts. Beginning with shorts, Mullan took *Orphans* to the Cannes Film Festival alongside his starring role in Ken Loach's *My Name is Joe* (Parallax/Road Movies 1998), for which he won Best Actor. Mullan subsequently went on to direct *The Magdalene Sisters* (Momentum/Scottish Screen/Film Council/IrishFilm/PFP/Temple 2002).

The film was released towards the end of the first term of a Labour government, and at a time when the promised changes were beginning to be seen in Scotland, but were also beginning to show that they were not all that they were believed to be. Unemployment was falling, and the hearts of the principal cities were being restored and rebuilt, yet alcohol abuse and violent crime were both rising. The fabric of Scotland was being repaired, but the needs of the Scottish people to re-define themselves for new, and modern times had not been addressed. Whilst other filmmakers were concentrating either on an ultra modern Scotland of gloss and superficiality, or were retreating to the safe territory of 'kilt movies', Mullan met the spirit of the time head on.

Figure 17.2 *Orphans*
Source British Film Institute

The central characters are the Catholic Flynn family, three brothers and their wheelchair-bound sister, who are orphaned as adults and face individual struggles across the night before their mother's funeral. Kissing their mother in her coffin, they retreat to a Glasgow pub, where Thomas (Gary Lewis) sings an embarrassingly emotional lament, and Michael (Douglas Henshall) is stabbed when he defends his brother from the reactions of someone in the pub. Youngest brother John (Stephen McCole) gets his brother away, leaving sister Sheila (Rosemarie Stevenson) in the hands of the unreliable and distraught Thomas. Thomas keeps his vow to his mother to keep watch over her coffin, but in doing so abandons his sister (to the mercy of a bizarre family of Good Samaritans). Michael meanwhile puts a positive spin on his stabbing and decides to wait until morning before seeking treatment as he can then falsely make an industrial injury claim, but in doing so risks bleeding to death. John is determined to seek revenge for the attack on his brother and with the help of a borderline psychotic cousin spends most of the film trying to obtain a gun.

The film's central value (that of 'the family') is constantly challenged throughout, and yet at the end it is this value that reunites and restores the grieving siblings. It also has at its heart the issue of masculinity in a post-industrial world, and Mullan uses the Glasgow landscape and even the harsh Glasgow weather to highlight the primal responses of the brothers as they find varying approaches to dealing with their grief and with their central problem (as men) of expressing it. The role of the disabled sister is one that equally serves to highlight the male emotional disability and Mullan often uses her responses to illustrate the weakness and ill-thought-through responses of the brothers. It is here that Mullan exposes the real damage inflicted by social change and inequality, in a raw and often brutal onslaught of cinematic expression.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Peter Mullan deliberately chooses to place his events against a background of Catholicism. How does this background 'flavour' the messages and values expressed in the film?
- The Flynn family bonds drive both the story and define the relationships within the film. What do you learn about Scottish family life from them? How is this representation of family different from or similar to other films you have studied?
- Peter Mullan uses a wide range of both macro and micro techniques and filmic references in telling his story. List the differing styles and techniques (and any wider filmic references) and note where they appear in the film. How do they help express values? What additional messages do they send?
- If Sheila had been the one looking to take revenge for her brother's stabbing, how would it have affected the messages and values expressed? List five things you learn from this film about gender representation.
- Discuss the male values expressed in the film and make a list of both positive and negative. Do the positives outweigh the negatives, or vice versa?

What message does this convey about men and maleness at this particular time?

- The film is set against the backdrop of Glasgow. Visit the Scottish Tourist Board website and look at the images of Glasgow offered there. How does Mullan's Glasgow compare? What do you think his careful choice of setting is saying about Glasgow, and more broadly about Scotland? What does the setting say about the characters and the events portrayed?

SCOTTISH GENRES

Since Bill Forsyth almost single-handedly re-launched Scottish film on the wider world in the early 1980s, the industry has produced a variety of features (and significantly more shorts) that have begun to define particularly Scottish genres of filmmaking, and in doing so have defined the audience for Scottish film.

Throughout Scotland's film history the 'kilt movie' dealing with 'great' historic moments from Scotland's past (both factual and fictional) has played a central role in depicting representations of Scotland, and in embedding a distinct image of both place and people. Often this representation came not from an indigenous people but from an external view: largely American through diverse films such as *Mary of Scotland* (RKO 1935, Director: John Ford) and *Braveheart* (TCF/Icon/Ladd 1995, Director: Mel Gibson), and English through films such as *Bonnie Prince Charlie* (British Lion/London Films 1948, Director: Anthony Kimmins), and *Mary Queen of Scots* (Universal/ Hal B. Wallis 1971, Director: Charles Jarrott). These films romanticized Scotland, depicting it as a land of rebels and heroes, as bleak and raw, and as fixed in time. It is therefore interesting that there has been little by way of tartanry from Scottish filmmakers themselves in this more recent period and that in the light of new representations offered by Scottish cinema the external view of historical Scotland has also changed, focusing more on the Celtic, and (again romanticized) indigenous people, victims of oppressive rulers (both Scottish and English) and of inter-clan division.

This is intrinsically linked with the 'pastoral' Scottish genre of rural or coastal communities with a cinematic focus on the landscape and on both the 'homespun' nature of communities and the desire to escape from a life that is as restrictive as it is idyllic. *Local Hero* fits neatly into the pastoral, as does *As An Eilean* (*From The Island*, Peculia Films/SFP 1993, Director: Mike Alexander) a Gaelic language film which offers a view of life on an island off the Scottish mainland where the concerns and foibles of island life are explored. Both films offer a mix of character types: the 'simple' inhabitants whose craft is that of survival, the educational elite (often those who have been away and have returned), and the mysterious outsider who has moved into the area, and both use the magnificent scenic backdrop to illustrate and reflect their stories.

KEY TERM

TARTANRY, KAILYARDISM, AND CLYDESIDEISM There are three types of representation that rise above all others in Scottish film and suggest not only some regional variance within Scotland, but also a sense of internal conflict between the past and present, the rural and the urban.

Tartanry encompasses a range of representations that see the Scots in traditional dress: either as the noble heroic Highland rebel, the laird or educated intellectual, or as the drunken, bagpipe-playing comedy act, and is one that focuses on the tartan as the key to Scottish identity (for better or worse).

Kailyardism emphasizes the small town or largely rural aspects of Scotland, depicting those who live in these areas as 'simple folk' of the land. This is usually accompanied by empowering them with folk wisdom and a 'natural' understanding of people (more often than not of either city types or the English), and with a strong sense of community that often involves intrigue.

Clydesideism perhaps reflects a more modern view of Scotland and is based around the working-class, industrialized people and areas, again offering a strong sense of community, but with a clearer sense of unromantic realism. With the demise of heavy industry in Scotland, Clydesideism is developing a sense of historic rather than current representation on the one hand, and on the other is evolving to reflect a disaffected working class, and declining communities.

In contrast to the pastoral, recent Scottish cinema has concentrated on the urban as a palette for a number of filmic representations, particularly those dealing with social issues. Most playfully was the use of the urban to define and characterize the heroin users in *Trainspotting* (Polygram/Channel 4/Figment/Noel Gay 1996, Director: Danny Boyle), where they are masters of their urban kingdoms (even though their urban kingdoms are declining as rapidly as they are). The working-class landscape, housing estates, betting shops, pubs, and the grey tenements of its predecessors are re-imaged as an under-class landscape stripped bare by the hunger of addictions and disconnected through years of hardship and neglect. This is then placed in stark contrast with the magnificence of the Highland landscape that dwarfs the four principal characters when they decide to leave the city and take a walk in the hills. Here they are markedly out of place and, whilst Tommy adopts a traditional viewpoint when he asks 'Doesn't it make you proud to be Scottish?', Renton's rebuke which defines all that is wrong with being Scottish further emphasizes the changing face of urban Scotland. This is echoed in *Orphans*, where the urban landscape similarly defines the characters and separates them both from a traditional pastoral setting and from Clydesideism, with the material decay of the city reflecting their moral and emotional crises.

A dominant genre of Scottish cinema is that which deals with significant social issues, be they drug problems, unemployment, or loan sharks, and a key exponent of this type of film has been Ken Loach who brought his brand of English social-realism to Scotland with screenwriter Bill Jesse's *Riff-Raff* (BFI/ Parallax, 1990) which whilst set largely outside Scotland focused on a Scottish building site worker (played by Robert Carlyle).

This was then followed by several other forays into Scotland for films such as *Carla's Song* (Polygram/Channel 4/GFF/Parallax/Road Movies, 1996), and *Sweet Sixteen* (Icon/Scottish Screen/BBC/ARD/Road Movies, 2002), the latter of which was shot in Greenock and was subtitled for the English-speaking audience. All three reflect the harsh reality of poverty and social breakdown, and represent a body of films that continue to represent aspects of Scottishness.

Connected to this genre is an associated genre that focuses purely on one key social problem, crime. The crime genre has been one that came to the fore in Scottish television drama in the late 1970s/early 1980s through the work of writers and directors such as Peter McDougal and John MacKenzie and was spectacularly launched on Scottish cinema by two key films: *Shallow Grave* (Rank/Figment/Channel 4/GFF 1994, Director: Danny Boyle) and *Small Faces* (Guild/BBC/GFF/Skyline 1995, Director: Gillies MacKinnon). The former deals with the criminal repercussions of a decision to dump the body of a deceased flatmate in order to keep the suitcase full of money he kept with him, whilst the latter deals more directly with the more traditional and recognizable crimes of Scotland's city gang warfare. The urban setting is central to these films and forms the backdrop for *The Debt Collector* (Film 4/GFF/Dragon, 1999, Director: Anthony Neilson) which sees Billy Connolly asserting his Glaswegian credentials as a hard man (refining his television role in Peter McDougal's 1993 *Down Among the Big Boys*) in a story which echoes the biography of real-life gangster Jimmy Boyle.

The black comedy which emerges in *Orphans*, *Shallow Grave*, and *Trainspotting* allies them all to the final significant (and perhaps oldest) Scottish film genre, comedy. Scottish film has a long history of comedy running though it, and in turn has used comedy to define Scottishness. Scots are perceived as having a peculiar, dry, witty humour which betrays a certain educated air and an inherent understanding of psychology (it is interesting that within Scotland itself there is a perception of regional variations to humour that roughly correspond with west coast Clydesideism, east coast Tartanry, and highland/island Kailyardism). *Local Hero* is a prime example of the 'gentle' Scottish comedy which, along with Bill Forsyth's earlier hit *Gregory's Girl* (Lake/NFFC/STV 1980) has defined much of the output in this genre, linking back to such 'classic' comedy as *Whiskey Galore!* (Ealing 1948, Director: Alexander MacKendrick), and encompassing many similar themes. Forsyth's work spawned a sub-genre of Scottish comedy which could be described as Forsythian through such films as *Restless Natives* (Thorn EMI/Oxford Film Company 1985, Director: Michael Hoffman), *The Girl in the Picture* (Rank/NFFC/Antonine 1985, Director: Cary Parker), and *Heavenly Pursuits* (Island Films/Skreba/Film Four 1986, Director: Charles Gormley), which relies on gentle, quirky and sometimes absurd narratives or characters and visual 'gags'.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Create two columns, one headed *Local Hero*, and the other headed *Orphans*. Under these headings list the scenes or sequences that associate these films with particular genres, and identify the key genre that each film belongs to.

continued

- In the Scottish genre films you have studied, can you arrive at a definition of the key features of that genre? Do the features evolve with time?
- Take one of the films you have studied and change the genre (for instance change *Local Hero* from comedy to social drama). What does this do to the story? Are there any key changes you have to make to ensure the story still works? Can you still use the same characters and locations? What would you have to significantly change to ensure the genre change 'works'?
- Look at the definitions of Tartanry, Kailyardism, and Clydesideism. Pick one of these and apply it to one of your focus films. How much evidence of these are in the films? Is the evidence found in the setting, the mise en scène, the script, or the characters?
- Select a genre. In a group, discuss what representations of Scotland and Scottishness are offered in this genre. What messages and values are promoted by this genre that are absent or down-played in other genres?

NATIONAL IDENTITY

At the same time that Bill Forsyth was building a raft of light comedies on which his version of Scottish national identity was being forged (and since they were international successes, this was a version of contemporary Scotland that was broadly accepted as representational) another filmmaker was making a film that would firmly position Scotland and Scottish film as 'other' to England and English film. *Hero* (Channel 4/Maya Films 1982, Director: Barney Platt-Mills) was the first Scottish film to be made in the Gaelic language and, whilst it was not the success it was expected to be, it set the idea in motion that not only could Scotland be defined within the English language, but it could be defined in its own tongue. Indeed shortly afterwards, funding became available through the Gaelic Film Fund to make Gaelic films (or films that were in more than one language) and to subtitle them for international distribution (including to England).

A resurgence of concern over national identity was growing through the 1980s and 1990s as was the demand for a Scottish Parliament, and with its birth came renewed efforts to support filmmaking that reflected a Scottish national identity (in all its forms). Whilst filmmaking had been receiving support for some years in Scotland, the focus had been on trying to produce films generic enough to succeed in international markets, yet the concerns over the dilution of Scottish identity saw this focus change to encourage filmmakers to explore Scottishness, in all its forms, including the un-diluted accents found in both *Trainspotting* and more so in *Sweet Sixteen*. Not only was Scotland speaking its own cinematic language, it was also doing it in its own accents.

Whilst for some considerable time this Scottishness had been defined in film not by what it was, but as 'other' to Englishness (often resulting in Tartanry or Kailyardism), as the period progressed, and progresses, a clearer, twenty-first century Scottish national identity is emerging with a representative set of messages and values. Lynne Ramsay's 2002 success *Morvern Callar* is illustrative of an emerging and changing

national identity in its darkly comic tale of Morvern Callar (Samantha Morton), a 21-year-old small town supermarket checkout girl from western Scotland, who wakes on Christmas morning to find her writer boyfriend has committed suicide. In a moment of opportunism she decides to conceal his death, and pass off his unpublished novel as her own. Selling it, Morvern escapes the life that the small port town offers, taking her best friend Lanna (Kathleen McDermott) with her to Ibiza to live a life of clubbing and partying. This grim, minimalist fairy tale offers a post-Thatcherite view of Scotland and of the values of the young, presented in a way that makes it hard to disapprove of Morvern's actions. The symbolism is not lost: in one of Scotland's declared 'greats' of Scottish cinema is a woman – something that was unlikely to have been possible in preceding generations of filmmaking – who is making films about the redefining of Scottish identity.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Make a list of those features you see as essentially Scottish. Compare this list with how often they appear in a film you have studied. Revise this list in the light of what your viewing reveals, and then compare it with a second film you have studied. What does this tell you about representations of Scottishness?
- Is it important for a small country, part of the United Kingdom, to have its own distinctive cinema? If so, why? How do you think this affects its perception internationally?
- Look at the principal characters from a film you have studied. Is there anything distinctively Scottish about their attitudes, values, and behaviour?
- Consider Tartanry, Kailyardism, and Clydesideism in terms of what they tell us about a national cinema. Are there any other categories you would like to add to this list that helps define national characteristics in film from the films you have watched? If so, what messages and values do these additional categories convey?

CLASS, REGIONAL IDENTITY, SEXUALITY, AND GENDER REPRESENTATION

Whilst Scotland is one country, it is a country that is radically different from lowland to highland, from east to west, from urban to rural, and its films reflect this difference, often through taking characters from one environment and placing them in another (as in *Local Hero*, *Restless Natives*, and *Trainspotting*). This strong sense of regional identity within Scotland often replaces the divisions of class found in English film, with a hierarchy which to all extents and purposes is structured around Clydeside, Tartan, and Kailyard. Indeed these divisions can sharply mark out a community and individuals within it, as in Michael Radford's *Another Time, Another Place*. Here in the Highlands of the Second World War, Janie (Phyllis Logan) an isolated crofter's wife begins a doomed

affair with Luigi (Giovanni Mauriello) an Italian prisoner of war assigned to help on her husband's farm. Not only is she breaking the sexual codes of her society, but she is also breaking with her regional identity and in doing so not only faces the wrath of her husband but also of the community she lives in. The regional identity is highlighted beautifully by the national identities that meet in the two principal characters, and at the same time this film serves to address issues of sexuality and gender representation. Can a crofter's wife, a Kailyard, be seen as a sexual being, and can a woman of this time be shown to take command of her own destiny?

Whilst masculinity is at the heart of films such as *Orphans*, *Trainspotting*, *Small Faces*, and *The Big Man* (Palace/Miramax/BSB/British STV Film Enterprises 1990, Director: David Leland), exploring what men are in a post-industrial landscape, the changing roles and perceptions of women have been central to the films of this period, and to constructing representations of Scottishness. Masculinity is often contextualized and commented on by the female roles, with contemporary men weakened by a changing society and adrift without a traditional role to fulfil. Danny Boyle depicts heroin-use as an almost male preserve in *Trainspotting* where the users are not victims of the drug, but of their own inability to forge a new role in communities that have been destroyed by the greed and disregard of the 1980s and 1990s. The women in this film support these men up to the point when they realize the inertia and inability of the men to adapt to the times that the women have already adapted to, and then cut them loose. This lack of evolution underpins the male roles in *Orphans* resulting in the inability to act, the inability to seek help, the inability to think rationally, and the inability to deal with their emotions, whereas Sheila's actions on screen evidence quite the reverse, delivering her both power and emotional strength.

In *Local Hero*, Bill Forsyth sets up a number of stereotypical characters and situations that initially confirm a range of traditional Scottish representations. However, as the film progresses, it becomes clear that Forsyth is satirizing the traditional representations and the only reasons they are established in this way is to challenge the stereotypes and to re-engage the audience with issues of representation and the debate around Scottish representation. Not only does he mock traditional 'maleness' but he also mocks the middle class who, in their belief of superiority, maintain and promote outdated representations.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Produce a grid with the titles of films you have studied on the horizontal axis and the names of a range of principal characters on the vertical axis. Try to get a mix of genders, classes, and ages. In each box place either a 'C' (for Clydeside), a 'T' (for Tartan), a 'K' (for Kailyard), or an 'O' (for Other).
- Does a pattern emerge within a film, and is there a pattern across a range of films?
- Are there significant gender differences?

- Does age play a factor in how a character is represented?
- Compare your results with the results for the same activity carried out on older Scottish films. What do you notice?
- Do you feel that any difference in pattern reflects changes in society?
- Discuss your results with others who have completed the same activity. What values do you think are being expressed by the filmmakers in relation to class, regional identity, sexuality, and gender representation?
- What messages do you believe the filmmakers want to convey to their audience(s) about these issues?
- Do you feel that these individual and specific representations combine to affect national identity?
- How do you feel these representations work in relation to each other when combined either into family or community?

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Whereas earlier periods of Scottish cinema either wholeheartedly supported social and political institutions (particularly the prewar documentary movement, of Stirlingshire-born John Grierson), or gently mocked them (as in *Whiskey Galore!*), the films of this new Scottish cinema take a fresh look at them, confronting, and in some, demolishing the established status quo.

Small Faces looks squarely at the often romanticized nature of gangs, and in doing so not only criticizes the working-class societies that have allowed them to flourish to the point of institutionalizing them, but also the underpinning religious sectarianism that fuels them. In 1960s Govanhill, a decaying Glasgow housing estate, the territory is divided up between the Glens, and the Tongs, led respectively by Charlie Sloan (Garry Sweeney), a sinister, would-be sophisticate, and Malky (Kevin McKidd) who is described by his peers as 'mental'. The three teenage McLean brothers who live on the borderline are drawn into gang warfare when Alan (Joseph McFadden) gets involved with Charlie Sloan's ex-girlfriend, and Lex (Iain Robertson), the youngest of the three, accidentally shoots Malky in the face with an airgun. As the 'decent' people of the estate stand by and watch, the 'institutional' violence grows, climaxing in Bobby McLean (Steven Duffy) being viciously murdered in a reprisal attack. Gang culture was (and to some extent, is) a part of everyday Scottish life for some members of society, and yet it was overlooked in film (though television had dealt with the issue of sectarian violence nearly fifteen years earlier). Whilst viewers are offered representations of the gangs at the start of the film that encourage understanding, sympathy, and even empathy, Gillies MacKinnon quickly reveals the disorder, dishonesty, and disregard that operates within such groups, and in doing so heightens the responsibility of society in letting such people take control of areas.

Case Study: *Bill Forsyth*

Glaswegian Bill Forsyth (1946–) began his career in cinema when as a teenager he applied for an assistant's job with the Thames and Clyde Film Production Company, and was successful because he could lift the heavy equipment there. He continued working with this and other small companies, working on documentaries and corporate films for private companies and government offices, and all the time learning the craft.

At the age of 32, tired of being denied funding for proposed feature film projects, Forsyth scraped together some money, and secured the assistance of actors from the Glasgow Youth Theatre, in order to make his first feature *That Sinking Feeling* (1979) which tells the comic story of a group of impoverished young men who hatch a plan to rob a warehouse full of sinks.

The success of this first feature led Forsyth to find funding for his second film *Gregory's Girl* (1981), and from this to develop a career as a BBC producer. His third feature *Local Hero* (1983) consolidated a career that would take him to Hollywood where his career would almost end in the box-office-driven demands of commerciality.

Returning to Scotland some fifteen years later, Bill Forsyth returned to one of his successes, making the sequel *Gregory's Two Girls*.

The political landscape had changed dramatically in Scotland since Bill Forsyth's first films, with not only the establishment of a Scottish Parliament, but also with the disappearance of the Conservative Party at constituency level in the 1997 General Election, but the anger at the destruction wrought on Scotland, both industrially and socially, in the Thatcherite years still dominates the films of this period. It can be detected in *That Sinking Feeling* when Ronnie (Robert Buchanan) argues drunkenly with the statue of a British war hero, concluding with his demanding 'So why don't I have a job?', and is certainly more evident in *Trainspotting* when Renton makes his 'state of the nation' speech after Tommy extols the virtues of the Scottish landscape, saying:

> It's shite being Scottish. We're the lowest of the low; the scum of the fuckin' earth. The most wretched, miserable, servile, pathetic trash that ever shat in civilization. Some people hate the English, I don't . . . [we] can't even find a decent culture to be colonized by.

This raw anger, directed at England as colonists, reflects a broader discontent with the way that a British Parliament had paid for (English) tax cuts with Scottish oil, had closed the Scottish collieries, and had allowed the Scottish shipbuilding industry to disappear into history as it bought cheaper built ships from around the world. The resulting unemployment paved the way for an epidemic of drug abuse, which has left Scotland with a lost generation.

This is graphically portrayed in Ken Loach's *Sweet Sixteen* where Greenock teenager Liam (Martin Compston) waits for his drug-addict mother Jean (Michelle Coulter) to be

released from prison just in time for his sixteenth birthday, and plans to buy a caravan on the edge of the Clyde as a new home for them. Liam (in a ruthless capitalist approach) decides to fund the purchase by stealing Jean's drug-dealing boyfriend's stash of heroin, and selling it himself. Unfortunately this brings him to the attention of a local crime lord who invites him to join his business, and soon Liam, who was trying to escape the deprivation of drug culture finds himself at the heart of it. This boy (for he is no more than a boy) should be going to school, should be heading into work, should be making a valuable contribution to society, but instead he has a parental role model who is a junkie convict, and a broader community that rejects him out of hand.

The politics of this period of filmmaking is not played out on the grand scale, but is built into the representations of community, of family, and of individuals, and comes as a response to the distance (both literal and political) of government from the problems faced by the Scottish people on a daily basis.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Discuss the relationships between locals and outsiders in the films you have studied. Do you think that there are political messages being conveyed about Scotland in the way these two groups interact? If so, what are they?
- What macro (narrative, genre, etc.) techniques do Scottish filmmakers use to bring social and political issues to the fore? Do these techniques work or do they date quickly? What techniques would you use to address these issues if you were re-making these films today?
- Scottish humour is used to prick the balloon-like vanity of many social and political institutions. How effective is it in highlighting problems? Does it de-value the issue by contextualizing it through humour? How else could it be done?
- Discuss the social and political values that Scottish films express in this period. What future are the filmmakers offering? What do they show as so wrong with the past/present?

PRODUCTION CONTEXT

The arrival of television money (initially through Channel 4, and then through BBC Films, Scottish Television, and the Comataidh Telebhisein Gaidhlig (CTG) the Gaelic Television Committee) kick-started regional filmmaking in Scotland in the early 1980s. Up until this point Scottish film had been reliant on English filmmakers finding their way north of the border, American filmmakers seeking an 'authentic' backdrop for their stories, and the occasional funding opportunity afforded to home grown talent.

This platform was built on aggressively with the development of Scottish Screen, the Highlands and Islands Film Commission, the Glasgow Film Office, and Edinburgh Film Focus, government funded agencies whose role was to encourage, develop, support and sustain home grown filmmaking, and to entice filmmakers from outside Scotland

to make films there. Realizing the huge task set for them, these agencies looked to create funding schemes that would offer opportunities for new talent to see their visions realised, and to nurture filmmakers at the start of their careers.

Feature film production received considerable financial support through Scottish Screen's Scottish Film Production Fund, through the Glasgow Film Fund, and the Scottish Arts Council's National Lottery Fund (with *Orphans* collecting funding from all three sources). The production of short films (which are often used as 'calling cards' to secure feature film funding, and hence 'seed' the industry) is supported through four schemes: Tartan Shorts, Prime Cuts, New Found Land, and Gear Ghearr which is a scheme targeted specifically at encouraging Gaelic language filmmaking.

NOTEBOX . . .

Figment Films

Figment Films was established in 1991 by Glasgow brothers Andrew and Kevin MacDonald, grandsons of the screenwriter/director Emeric Pressburger. Together with writer Dr John Hodge (who was a Registrar in Edinburgh's Eastern General Hospital) they secured funding from the Scottish Film Production Fund, the Glasgow Film Fund, and most importantly, Channel 4 to produce the black comedy *Shallow Grave* (Rank/Figment/Channel 4/GFF 1994, Director: Danny Boyle). Once they had secured the services of director Danny Boyle they made a film that launched the careers of Christopher Ecclestone and Ewan McGregor, secured a number of awards, and brought contemporary Scottish cinema back to the attention of a world audience. Together with Danny Boyle the brothers went on to make box office successes of *Trainspotting* (1995), *Twin Town* (Polygram/Figment/Agenda/Aimimage 1996, Director: Kevin Allen), *A Life Less Ordinary* (Polygram/Figment 1996), and *The Beach* (TCF/Figment 2000).

There is no question that Scottish film production is in a period of growth with a number of plans being submitted for Scottish National Film Studios including a complex at Aberuthven in Perthshire.

EXAMPLE EXAM QUESTIONS

1 How are issues of Scottish identity addressed in the films you have studied?

2 What values expressed in the films you have studied could be described as specifically Scottish, and how are they conveyed?

3 How does Scottish film use the landscape to convey messages and values?

4 Scottish film is about the reaction of an indigenous population to outside influences. Discuss this statement in relation to the films you have studied.

5 Is there any benefit to understanding messages and values in Scottish films in exploring the use of stereotypes?

6 Men and women are used differently in Scottish films. What are some of the ways in which they are used, and what does this convey?

7 What can you discover about issues of identity from looking at the depiction of community in Scottish film?

8 How have the filmmakers used sound and image to present the messages and values of their films?

FURTHER READING

Bruce, David (1996) *Scotland the Movie*, Edinburgh: Polygon/SFC.

Dick, Eddie (ed.) (1990) *From Limelight to Satellite: A Scottish Film Book*, London: BFI/SFC.

Forsyth Hardy, *Scotland in Film* (Edinburgh University Press, 1990)

Hill, John (1999) *British Cinema in the 1980s*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

McArthur, Colin (1982) *Scotch Reels: Scotland in Cinema and Television*, London: BFI.

Pendreigh, Brian (2002) *The Pocket Scottish Movie Book*, Edinburgh: Mainstream.

Petrie, Duncan (2000) *Screening Scotland*, London: BFI.

Smith, Murray (2002) *Trainspotting*, London: BFI.

USEFUL WEBSITES

http://www.baftascotland.co.uk (BAFTA (Scotland))

http://www.britishpictures.com (a resource offering essays, articles, reviews, and title-specific information)

http://www.britmovies.co.uk (valuable for synopses, cast lists, etc.)

http://www.edinfilm.com (Edinburgh Film Focus – strategic agency for film in Edinburgh)

http://www.glasgowfilm.org.uk (Glasgow Film Office – strategic agency for film in Glasgow)

http://www.scotfilm.com (the Scottish Highlands and Islands Film Commission)

http://www.scottishscreen.com (Scotland's leading film body (and film archive))

http://www.visitscotland.com (the Scottish Tourist Board site)

18 COMEDY

This chapter deals with:

- the nature of comedy as a genre;
- representational ways of seeing the world to be found in comedies;
- possible approaches to recent British comedies;
- possible approaches to postwar British comedies.

NOTEBOX . . .

This chapter will be directly relevant to your work on FS3 – Messages and Values: British and Irish Cinema for the WJEC's AS Level in Film Studies, particularly if you are studying comedy films but also in offering further ways of approaching films in general. (More indirectly, because of the way in which it examines films in terms of messages and values, this chapter will be helpful if you study later FS5 – Studies in World Cinema.)

FILMS MENTIONED

As you work your way through this chapter you need to watch at least some of the following films in full and at least short sequences from the others:

- *East is East* (O'Donnell, 1994)
- *The Full Monty* (Cattaneo, 1997)
- *Passport to Pimlico* (Cornelius, 1949)
- *The Lavender Hill Mob* (Crichton, 1951)
- *Genevieve* (Cornelius, 1953)

NOTEBOX . . .

WJEC focus films: *East is East* (O'Donnell, 1994) and *The Ladykillers* (Mackendrick, 1955)

ACTIVITY . . .

- Ask yourself the question, what is comedy and what are comedies? Brainstorm your own ideas about the nature of comedy and comedy films. These films would seem to present the world to us in a particular way that enables us to recognize them as falling within a specific category, but how exactly do you see them as doing this? What is it about the nature of the subject matter and the way in which that subject matter is presented to us that marks them out as comedies?
- Sum-up in 200 words the way in which you would define comedy and the nature of comedy films.
- If possible, read the definitions that several other people have come up with, and identify any similarities and differences.
- If you are working with a whole class, try to agree on a single collective definition, perhaps limiting it to no more than 150 words.

DEFINING COMEDY

In the theatre, 'comedy' originally simply referred to a play that was not a tragedy and did not necessarily imply the fundamental association with humour that the word tends to carry today. Aristotle saw it as referring to a play dealing with ordinary characters in ordinary situations in an amusing way. The term has strong associations with drama and the theatre but in common usage today the term has largely been taken over by cinema, television and radio.

ACTIVITY . . .

Think of comedies you know, whether films or on TV. Do they deal with ordinary people in ordinary situations in an amusing way? Is this a good definition of the comedies you can think of? Does it fit all the comedies you can think of?

ACTIVITY . . .

How many different sorts of television and/or cinema comedy can you list? For each type, try to give an example. Romantic comedies would be an obvious example, but how many others can you think of?

The Greek word 'komos', from which we derive the word 'comedy', does refer to merry-making and in this tradition these plays did have some association with fertility rites, a convention with which 'romantic comedies' are obviously in tune. You may be familiar with the convention found in Shakespeare's plays that comedies should end with differences being resolved in a happy marriage.

However, comedy has also been used in a perhaps more serious way to satirize authority and ridicule social codes or human behaviours. The form often depends upon intricate plots and the use of surprise but can also employ exaggerated imitation, clowning, buffoonery, slapstick and knockabout farce.

ACTIVITY . . .

Think about comedies you know. Do any of them involve:

- bringing together young couples in love, and perhaps ending in marriage?
- ridiculing, or in a more gentle way poking fun at, certain sorts of behaviour or people in positions of authority?
- the use of complicated plots and unexpected events?
- exaggerated imitations, clowning or slapstick style humour?

KEY TERM

SATIRE The use of ridicule, irony or sarcasm to expose vice or stupidity; the lampooning of self-important individuals.

(Obviously now you are going to need to make sure you know what 'ridicule', 'irony' and 'lampooning' mean. We are sure you know what 'sarcasm' means.)

FILM AND WAYS OF SEEING THE WORLD

Comedy films, in line with all other types of film, attempt to re-present what we might call the 'out-there' world or the world as it exists, in a very particular way that presents to the audience a specific way of seeing that world. Therefore, in reading comedy films just as with other genres, we should consider the ways in which such concepts as gender, class, race, sexuality, national identity, regional identity, cultural identity and religious identity are being addressed. With one eye on the so-called 'war on terror'

and our experience of living with its consequences, we might also note that during any period of potential political intolerance it is especially vital to champion the importance of comedy as a means of exploring these sorts of serious issues involving divisions between people.

Race

In considering representations of race and racial identity in films we need to decide how we would define the concept of 'race' and how we might consider racial identity to be acquired. We could then assess:

- whether any given film was defining 'race' in a similar way, or in a different way;
- whether the film under consideration was showing racial identity as being acquired in any particular way;
- whether it was seeing the concepts of race and racial identity as being fixed, or as varying between places and over time;
- whether particular races were being given roles within the narrative while others were being excluded;
- whether particular alliances between races were being shown;
- whether racial stereotypes were being employed;
- whether race was being shown as a means of oppression;
- whether the racial difference of 'outsiders' was accepted within the film's narrative or not.

Fundamentally, the concept of race is a means of categorizing people according to supposed biological characteristics such as skin colour or hair texture. This angle of approach will be an especially important aspect of our analysis when considering a film such as *East is East* (O'Donnell, 1999) which deals with the experience of a British Pakistani family living in Salford in 1970.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Go through the above list with a small group of other people if possible. Consider each idea carefully and see whether any further possible questions occur to you.
- Try to feed back your ideas to the whole class if time allows and discuss any areas of difference or uncertainty.

Gender

In considering the representation of gender identities we need first to ask how we might define the idea of 'gender': what is it and how is it acquired? In particular we need to define the term 'gender' as distinct from 'sex' and 'sexuality'. Basically, a person's sex is denoted by their genital make-up or the biology of their body; a person's sexuality is defined by their sexual feelings and behaviour; and a person's gender is that male

or female construction of self given to a person by the society and culture they inhabit. In considering gender in any given film we need to investigate:

- whether men and women are represented in particular identifiable ways;
- whether the film makes an assumption that gender is fixed, as opposed to recognizing that gender as a social construct might vary across time and between cultures;
- whether the dominant descriptions of femininity and masculinity presented to the audience are simply those that fit the standards of a patriarchal society, or a society built upon fundamentalist religious beliefs;
- whether men are shown as active and women as passive;
- whether men dominate the narrative while women tend to be marginalized.

This will be an especially important approach when considering a film such as *The Full Monty* (Cattaneo, 1997) in which the disruption of traditional gender roles forms the very heart of both the comedy and the narrative.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Go through the above list with a small group of other people if possible. Consider each idea carefully and see whether any further possible areas for investigation occur to you.
- Try to feed back your ideas to the whole class and discuss any areas of difference or uncertainty.

Sexuality

In considering representations of sexuality we might begin by looking to see:

- whether sexual identity is seen to be fixed from birth or acquired via socialization;
- whether sexual identity is seen as being certain or something more fluid and ambiguous;
- whether there are clear representations of heterosexual behaviour, homosexual behaviour, and/or bisexual behaviour;
- whether sexual stereotypes are being employed, and if so from where they might derive (whether for instance this is again a case of a patriarchal society displaying its machismo beliefs or fundamentalist religious attitudes);
- whether any particular sexual behaviours or feelings are being presented in a negative or positive light;
- whether there is any awareness of how sexual norms and expectations may have changed over time.

This approach might be helpful in relation to both *East is East* and *The Full Monty*.

Class

In considering class representations, which is basically the idea that a society can be seen in terms of a hierarchy of stratifications with those in higher classes having more power, wealth and status than those in lower classes, we could investigate a film to see:

- whether class is seen as fixed from birth, or is used as a flexible concept;
- whether there are clear representations of working-class, middle-class and upper-class values;
- whether these are stereotypes, or more complex representations;
- whether these major class definitions are shown as subject to further sub-division;
- whether a hierarchical class structure is questioned, or simply accepted by the text.

It would be interesting to see how you felt about these sorts of questions in relation to *The Full Monty* and *East is East*; but such questions might offer an even more fruitful approach in relation to the post-Second World War comedies considered here later.

ACTIVITY . . .

Go through the questions posed here for sexuality and class with other people, and as before see if you can add to the lists.

'Britishness'

Similar approaches should be taken to issues of nation and national identity, and culture and cultural identity, paying particular attention to the issue of what might be said to constitute 'Britishness' and how this concept is presented in any given film. Again, this area will be particularly useful in relation to *East is East* where the issue of 'Britishness' and cultural difference is at the heart of both the comedy and what could be called the tragedy of the film. However, it is also especially relevant to the postwar comedies where in the absence of the multiculturalism of *East is East* the notion of national identity will be paramount. Often films attempt to suggest that a cohesive national identity exists within a country. Our interest is first of all in the exact nature of that representation of national identity and second in what relationship that representation might have to the social and historical reality.

KEY TERM

NATIONAL IDENTITY A sense of national identity seems to depend upon some shared stock of images, ideas, norms and values, stories and traditions. Nations might be described as imagined communities or communities that exist in the individual (and the collective?) imagination within the physical borders of a nation-state. This affects the way we see both ourselves and others classified

as existing outside the 'in-group'. Yet, national identity does not exist in some singular, uncontested form. Rather it is a site of struggle constantly undergoing a process of re-affirmation or re-definition.

KEY TERM

CULTURAL IDENTITY This can refer to personal identity chosen for yourself or an identity ascribed to you by others. You might choose to describe yourself as 'British Pakistani' showing your identification with what you feel to be an intertwined cultural background, while others might identify you as 'Asian'. However, notice this will in fact only be part of your cultural identity, the racial/national identity part. Your cultural identity will also be formed from your categorization within other cultural spheres such as class, gender and age. So, for example, the key foci of your cultural identity might be young, male, middle-class, Christian, British Pakistani.

NOTEBOX . . .

The really important point is that, whilst paying particularly close attention to the details of the films themselves and thinking about ideas of comedy, it is also vital for you to be questioning what you are seeing in relation to the nature of the world around you, or the nature of the society from within which the film is made.

Case Study: *The Full Monty* (1997)

(Director: Peter Cattaneo. Screenwriter: Simon Beaufoy. Cinematographer: John de Borman. Music: Anne Dudley. Cast: Robert Carlyle (Gaz); Mark Addy (Dave); Tom Wilkinson (Gerald); Lesley Sharp (Jean); Steve Huison (Lomper); Emily Woof (Mandy).)

ACTIVITY . . .

- After having watched the film once decide how you think this film represents issues of class, gender and sexuality. Make notes and discuss your ideas with others if possible.

- Draw up a list of two or three scenes that you feel deal with each of these areas.
- Write a short essay-style response of about 600 words summing up your ideas. Remember to try to use examples to support your points.

Male gender roles

Within the social norms of British society men are traditionally expected to fulfil certain roles and embody certain values. They should be physically and emotionally strong, sexually virile and determinedly heterosexual. Above all their role is to work and provide financial security for the family. But in this film:

- Dave is fat, out of condition and unable to perform in bed;
- Gaz is emotionally vulnerable and struggles to show his love for Nathan;
- Gerald lacks the courage to tell his wife he has lost his job;
- Horse is worried about the size of his penis;
- Lomper and Guy turn out to be gay;
- most importantly they are all unemployed ('on the scrapheap' as Gaz calls it).

ACTIVITY . . .

Consider the scene early in the film in which Gaz, Dave and Nathan are walking down the steps towards a woman and then past the working men's club with the poster advertising the forthcoming show by male strippers. In groups, discuss as many aspects as possible of this scene that deal with issues of gender and/or sexuality.

Female gender roles

In contrast to the men, both Dave's wife, Jean, and Gaz's former wife, Mandy, are in work (with Jean being the main breadwinner in her home and Mandy twice offering her former partner, Gaz, a job). In addition it is Gerald's wife, Linda, who reveals real strength of character when she finally finds out about her husband being unemployed. Previously, Gerald has portrayed her as a stereotypical spendthrift housewife roaming the High Street intent on spending the male breadwinner's hard-earned money but in fact at the moment of crisis she reveals a strength and dignity that her husband has been unable to manage to that stage. Finally, notice that not only are these women taking over the work roles of men but they are also seen symbolically invading male spaces such as the working men's club and even the men's toilet.

Messages and values

In traditional terms then, the men are seen as having been emasculated by this society. (How is the scene in the job centre, for instance, deliberately structured to emphasize the male loss of power?) But what the film also shows is the men struggling to re-define their roles in a new society, and indeed succeeding in doing so:

- Gaz improves his relationship with Nathan (and it is perhaps suggested by the ending, also with Mandy);
- Dave successfully rekindles his sexual relationship with Jean it seems;
- Gerald secures a new job but also develops an enhanced sense of loyalty to his former mates;
- Lomper and Guy are accepted within the male group despite their homosexuality.

ACTIVITY . . .

Consider the scene in which Gaz takes Nathan to school. How is this filmed in order to give a sense of the difficulties being experienced in the father-son relationship? In particular, you should look at aspects of performance including the delivery of specific lines, and the deliberately symbolic structure employed in the composition of specific shots.

ACTIVITY . . .

Are there any other messages and/or values that you feel are important to mention in relation to this film? Brainstorm your own ideas and then discuss these with other people if possible.

The Full Monty as a comedy

In adopting an approach such as that above it is important not to neglect the fact that this film is a comedy. So, in addition to investigating the ways in which male and female roles are being represented we do also need to explore the use of comedy.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Working with one or two others if possible, divide the comedy in this film into as many different categories as possible and give at least one

example of each. You might like to refer back to the opening section to this chapter where the nature of comedy was considered.

- For each example used see if you can identify a more serious underpinning issue that is being touched upon.

Figure 18.1 *The Full Monty*
Source: C4 / RGA

Case Study: *East is East* (1999)

(Director: Damien O'Donnell. Screenwriter: Ayub Khan-Din. Cinematographer: Brian Tufano. Cast: Om Puri (George); Linda Bassett (Ella); Jordan Routledge (Sajid); Archie Panjabi (Meenah); Emil Marwn (Maneer); Chris Bisson (Saleem); Jimi Mistry (Tariq); Raji James (Abdul); Ian Aspinall (Nazir).)

Genre

There are plenty of serious issues in *The Full Monty* but the comedy remains to the forefront. There is also a strong feel-good factor attached to the final scene that

perhaps could be accused of glossing over the reality of working-class hardship and suffering under Thatcherism. But with this film there are moments when you have to doubt whether it can truly be classified as a comedy and should not more correctly be described as a drama.

ACTIVITY . . .

Try to identify and list for yourself points in the film at which the sense of this as a comedy almost seems to be lost.

Characters and narrative structure

In any film such as this where there are a fair number of central characters it is important to make sure you have a clear grasp on the nature and role of each within the narrative. Notice that there are elements of straightforward comedy attached to each character. For example, it is important that we should not simply see George as some sort of ogre as we have to understand why Ella loves him, and so there are those endearing moments such as the buying of the dentist's chair for his wife.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Use a single diagram to represent the relationship between the central characters.
- Beneath each character note one or two comic scenes within which they play a central role and sum up their character in one sentence.
- Keeping words of explanation to a minimum, construct a flow diagram showing the development of the film's narrative.
- Compare your diagrams with other people's if possible, and discuss both similarities and differences.

Historical context

The context of the period in which this is set is clearly important. The Khans are an Anglo-Pakistani family living in Salford in 1970. War between India and Pakistan is about to break out over East Pakistan, shortly to become Bangladesh, and in Britain racist attitudes against immigrants are being encouraged by right-wing political groups and given a central focus by the Conservative MP, Enoch Powell.

Representation

After watching the film, consider the representation of the following areas:

- race relations/relationships;
- cultural tensions/expectations;
- social values and norms;
- religion;
- national identity.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Briefly note your thoughts on each of these areas, referring to actual shots or sequences within the film to illustrate your ideas.
- Compare your ideas with those of other people if possible. In particular you should find yourself discussing ideas relating to:
  - patriarchy and domestic violence;
  - difficulties faced by first-generation immigrants;
  - difficulties faced by second-generation immigrants.

As a comedy

Comedies traditionally have happy endings: there are ways in which this ending might be said to conform to this pattern but the dénouement certainly remains challenging. Maybe we need to consider other possible comedy types for this film: dark comedy, black comedy or tragi-comedy. These are terms that often describe comedies of this ilk: perhaps dark comedy would be most suitable.

ACTIVITY . . .

- Working with one or two others if possible, divide the comedy in this film into as many different categories as possible and give at least one example of each.
- For each example you use, see if you can identify a more serious underpinning issue that is being touched upon.
- Does this underlying seriousness make the term 'dark comedy' appropriate?

ACTIVITY . . .

Re-watch the opening to the film and discuss with others ways in which this might be a particularly appropriate exposition phase. How could the events of the opening be considered in some way symbolic of the whole film?

ACTIVITY . . .

Try either or both of these essays:

1 By referring to no more than two sequences, one in *East is East* and another in *The Full Monty* show how messages and values relating to family issues are central to both films. Remember that within your answer it is important to refer to ways in which meaning is created through the use of cinematography, mise en scène, editing and sound, and perhaps also through narrative structure and genre.
2 By a close analysis of either the opening or the ending of either of these films explore key messages and values to be found in your chosen film. Again, remember that within your answer it is important to refer to ways in which meaning is created through the use of cinematography, mise en scène, editing and sound, and perhaps also through narrative structure and genre.

POSTWAR COMEDIES

The Second World War brought about considerable social change in Britain with the old established class structure beginning to show signs of disintegration. In 'We are the masters now' Anthony Howard claims (French and Sissons 1986), 'The war had eroded practically every traditional social barrier in Britain.' But the Prime Minister, Clement Atlee, was calling on people to display in peace the (supposed) unity shown in war and to be prepared to continue to endure hardships: 'We have come through difficult years and we are going to face difficult years and to get through them we will require no less effort, no less unselfishness and no less work than was needed to bring us through the war' (Johnson 1994).

There was social change taking place with, for example, the founding of the National Health Service but at the same time the war had been costly and British industry was increasingly inefficient. Rationing actually increased after the war with, for example, bread and potatoes being rationed for the first time and clothing and furniture rationing staying in place until the end of 1949 (see the opening to *Passport to Pimlico*). People were disgruntled with officialdom: demobilization, for instance, proceeded too slowly

for some with almost twice as many people still being in the armed forces in 1948 as there were in 1939. There was a winter fuel crisis during the extremely cold winter of 1947 with power output being below prewar levels so that electricity cuts had to be made. At the same time all over the former British Empire, in India, Burma, Ceylon, Malaya and Kenya for instance, independence movements were springing up and further questioning Britain's status as a world power. It is against this sort of background that comedies from this period have to be read.

Case Study: *Genevieve* (1953)

(Director: Henry Cornelius. Screenwriter: William Rose. Cinematographer: Christopher Challis. Composer: Larry Adler. Cast: John Gregson (Alan), Dinah Sheridan (Wendy), Kenneth More (Ambrose), Kay Kendall (Rosalind).)

England: a green and pleasant land?

If you are looking at some older British films, *Genevieve* would be an interesting comedy to consider. This film seems to portray England as a green and pleasant land where the worst that could happen is that your vintage or veteran car might break down on the annual London to Brighton run. There appear to be no serious issues or social criticism beneath the light superficial fun of the film's surface. Politically the suggestion emanating from such comedies could well be said to be that everything in England is fine and we are lucky to live in such a place. If this is the case, notice that this in itself is actually still political in the sense that it supports the status quo and suggests there is no need for change. From this perspective the film works to pacify the audience into believing all is well in 1950s Britain.

However, what if we were to see the whole comfortable middle-class perspective of peace and prosperity for all that is displayed in so many films from this period as being exaggerated to the point of ridicule here? If you have already seen *Passport to Pimlico* (dealt with below and in Chapter 13) does the fact that the same person directed both of these films complicate our interpretation of *Genevieve*? Could *Genevieve* be deliberately parodying, even satirizing, Establishment notions of England and the British national identity?

Britishness

If we take the first view of the film suggested then this is a gentle comedy which could be described as summing up a particular sort of 'Britishness': a cosy couple, Alan and Wendy, race against their friends, Ambrose and Rosalind, through the South-East heartland of England on the London to Brighton vintage car rally. From this perspective, this is an escapist fantasy taking the audience into a world where nothing bad ever happens, or can ever intrude; an upper middle-class film

made for the consumption of the working class within the dominant British cinematic tradition. Notice the language use ('sport', 'old man', 'darling', 'don't be such a stinker', 'she must be blotto'); the food and drink (sherry, and olives in the sandwiches); and the clothes of our central characters. But the question remains as to whether we might not see this as a more interesting tongue-in-cheek, even satirical, take on 'Britishness' and the Little Englander mentality. Certainly it raises just as many issues to do with national identity as *East is East*.

ACTIVITY . . .

After you have watched the film discuss with others how you think it should be read. Try to put forward evidence from the film for your position. Could it be equally valid to read it in either of the ways suggested here?

EALING COMEDIES

If you undertake any background reading on films from the Ealing Studio you will notice how their comedies are often described as classically British. In fact, they could be seen as setting up a working-class notion of 'Britishness' that is essentially distinct from the more usual middle-class filmic notion of what it means to be British. The principal characters in, for example, both *Passport To Pimlico* (Cornelius, 1949) and *The Lavender Hill Mob* (Crichton, 1951), are all outsiders: they are not members of 'the Establishment' with social power and standing as Alan and Ambrose are in *Genevieve*, and their struggle is clearly portrayed as a struggle against that established order. The director of Ealing Studios during the period, Michael Balcon, described the attitude of those working there towards filmmaking in this way: 'The bloodless revolution of 1945 had taken place, but I think our first desire was to get rid of as many wartime restrictions as possible and get going . . . There was a mild anarchy in the air' (Balcon 1969).

Representations of the working class

Characters in these films are often alienated from the established order and spend their time rebelling against the constrictions imposed upon their lives by 'the Establishment'. These films are, in short, characterized by a strong sense of rebellion, what Balcon calls 'mild anarchy'. In this way it might be possible to suggest these films are in tune with the mood of the age: there were a rash of strikes in late 1944, and in 1945 Attlee's Labour Party won a landslide general election victory launching plans for a welfare state and widespread nationalization (Balcon's 'bloodless revolution').

In *Passport to Pimlico* ordinary working-class people are shown to have a defiant resilience and tenacity, while those in positions of power and authority are exposed as autocratic, bureaucratic and repressive, and driven by concerns of monetary gain. See too how

(as with the bank manager in *Passport to Pimlico* and the bank employee, Mr Holland, in *The Lavender Hill Mob*) society is shown as attempting to suppress individuality. One character ironically comments on Mr Holland that he has no imagination and his only virtue is his honesty. Is this the way most employees/workers are viewed? Isn't this a traditional view of the working class that is in this film exposed as false?

Working-class revolt

Passport to Pimlico shows working-class people taking charge of their lives in revolutionary ways: see how they tear up their ration books and identity cards, the symbols of uniformity, conformity and centralized control over the individual. (The range of goods covered by rationing actually increased in Britain after the war and continued in some cases into the 1950s.) The central characters continually define themselves as 'English', but their idea of Englishness centres upon a form of defiant working-class self-sufficiency and a determination not to bow beneath the yoke of officialdom being imposed from above. To emphasize the point once more, what is certain here and what is glossed over by popular descriptions of Ealing comedies is that the Englishness given expression in these films is often strongly working class: it is not the upper middle-class, public school-based Englishness (Britishness?) that is more usually found in British cinema of the 1940s and 1950s.

ACTIVITY . . .

- How would you define the difference between the two terms, 'Britishness' and 'Englishness'? How is each used and in what sorts of circumstances is one used in preferences over the other?
- When you are clear in your own mind about these two concepts, exchange thoughts with other people, if possible.

ACTIVITY . . .

Try either or both of these essay titles:

1 In your opinion how serious are the postwar comedies you have studied? Remember to refer to at least two films and to use detailed examples to support your points.
2 In what ways would you say the postwar comedies you have studied could be considered to be similar and in what ways are they different? Remember to refer to at least two films and to use detailed examples to support your points.

EXAMPLE EXAM QUESTIONS

1. How is comedy used to represent serious situations and issues in the films you have studied?
2. How useful have you found it to know something about the period in which the comedies you have studied were made?
3. To what extent in your experience do comedy films tend to rely on stereotypes?
4. What have been the chief comedy features of the films you have watched and how useful have these features been in helping to convey messages and values?
5. What have the films you have studied had to say about the concept of 'Britishness'?

CONCLUSION

- Comedy is a very old form of creative human expression that uses a range of identifiable techniques.
- Essentially the world is being represented, or re-presented, to us via comedy films in the same way as in other films.
- What we see is not the world but a highly constructed interpretation of it; and we have to be aware of the ways in which concepts such as class, race, gender, sexuality and national identity are just as relevant to comedy films as to other types of film.
- It is also useful to try to see these representations within the context of the historical moment that the film is made.

FURTHER READING

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GLOSSARY

Agents Not only actors but also directors, screenwriters, producers, cinematographers and others involved in commercial filmmaking have agents. The system under which these people would have been kept on full-time contracts to the studios came to an end during the 1950s, and from this point agents became especially important within the industry as they had the power to continually re-negotiate one-off film deals for those on their books.

The role of agents representing top stars is particularly powerful. If as a studio you believe it is the stars who really sell films you will be prepared to pay a large percentage of your budget to secure the services of the star you believe will best embody the image required for your film.

'Blind buying' This means you have to take the films on offer without having a chance to first view them to see if you want them or not.

'Block booking' This means you have to agree to take all of the films produced by a studio in a year including the lesser films in order to get the major productions.

British New Wave A movement of well-educated, leftist filmmakers largely from a northern England, working-class background, that used 'realism' to construct stories of working-class lives ('kitchen-sink dramas'). Originally working on short films and documentaries as part of their 'free cinema' concept they graduated to feature film production establishing a north of England production base to compete with what they saw as a London-focused and London-centred industry. They included filmmakers Lindsay Anderson, Karel Reisz, and Tony Richardson.

Camerawork This clearly and quite simply refers to the work done with the camera in the making of a film. However, the possibilities open to the cinematographer are anything but simple. Fundamentally, the camera can be positioned at any distance from the subject being filmed and at any angle to that subject. It can be turned left or right to follow a subject within a horizontal plane, or tilted up or down to follow the same subject in a vertical plane. It can also be moved at any speed towards, away from or around the subject, and this movement can be as smooth or as shaky as the filmmakers decide. In addition, lenses can be used to give the appearance of movement towards or away from the subject at any speed, or to make the image of the subject

either sharper or more indistinct, or even to alter the appearance of the subject in the style of a fairground 'hall of mirrors'.

The only limitation on the fluidity and mobility of the camerawork in any film is the availability of the necessary technology to enable the desired effect to be achieved; and, in general terms, camera and lens technology has developed throughout film history in such a way as to permit increasingly complex camerawork. So, for instance, new lightweight cameras (and sound recording gear) in the 1950s made it easier to take the equipment out on location.

However, what you will find if you get the chance to watch some clips from old silent films is that even from very early in film history cinematographers were devising imaginative ways of getting moving shots with these rather large, heavy wooden cameras. So, yes, available technology must to some extent impose limitations upon what can be achieved, but often it is the creativity with which available technology is used that is of most interest.

Cause and effect This refers to the way in which mainstream films are moved forward by one scene or event having been caused by an earlier one and in turn giving rise to an effect which is seen in a subsequent scene or event. What this means is that everything we see has been motivated by something we have seen earlier and in turn motivates something we see further on in the film.

Chronology The ordering of a series of events in time sequence. This is the simplest way of setting out a story and is important in films such as *Bloody Sunday* (Greengrass, 2002) (see FS3 British Cinema – Social and Political Conflict), involving the shooting of people taking part in a civil rights demonstration in Northern Ireland in 1972, where the development of events in sequence over a set period of time is a vital part of the whole creative enterprise.

Clydesideism This perhaps reflects a more modern view of Scotland and is based around the working-class, industrialized people and areas, again offering a strong sense of community, but with a clearer sense of unromantic realism. With the demise of heavy industry in Scotland, Clydesideism is developing a sense of historic rather than current representation on the one hand, and on the other is evolving to reflect a disaffected working class, and declining communities.

Colour This can be used in highly artificial ways for particular expressive purposes as in the make-up employed by the changed Jude in *The Crying Game*, for instance, (where it would seem to perhaps suggest the danger of a femme fatale) or it can be employed in an effort to achieve naturalism by re-creating the colours of the real world.

Commercial process A commercial process is one that is focused upon achieving a financial return, in other words making a profit.

Contrapuntal sound This is a great technique where the sound is not directly related to the image, but when placed together an additional meaning (or depth of meaning) is created. Thus the sound of a boxing match playing on a television in shot becomes more significant when the person watching the match walks into another room and begins beating an elderly person in there. The sound carried across from the television

to the room where the beating is taking place is in counterpoint to the image of the abuse, yet serves to make a bigger statement about violence in general. It may be that a mix of contrapuntal sound and the diegetic sound of the beating may heighten this statement further.

Costume and props This refers to items of clothing being worn by characters and objects seen within any given setting. At its simplest, costume clearly acts as a type of uniform, linking a character to a particular group and often to a rank or position within that group. But costume can also 'announce' a character, giving an insight into what this person is supposed to be like, for instance shy or flamboyant. At their simplest, props work to give an authentic sense of place, but can also be used in more complex ways to suggest important characteristics of particular individuals or even key themes for the whole film.

Cultural identity This can refer to personal identity chosen for yourself or an identity ascribed to you by others. You might choose to describe yourself as 'British Pakistani' showing your identification with what you feel to be an intertwined cultural background, while others might identify you as 'Asian'. However, notice this will in fact only be part of your cultural identity, the racial/national identity part. Your cultural identity will also be formed from your categorization within other cultural spheres such as class, gender and age. So, for example, the key foci of your cultural identity might be young, male, middle-class, Christian, British Pakistani.

Diegetic sound Diegetic sound is the sound that is heard in the fictional world, the sound that the characters in that world can hear. Most diegetic sound is not recorded 'on location' but is fabricated and 'dubbed' on to the film by sound designers and 'foley artists' (people who generate sound effects such as cutting into a cabbage to make the sound of someone being guillotined).

DVD Digital Versatile Disc, the system that has now almost replaced VHS video. Discs can hold much more information than video tapes (providing the possibility for all sorts of 'extras' to be included alongside the main film) and offer a higher quality image.

Expectations The set of ideas each of us brings with us when we watch any film. These may be expectations to do with story structure, character development, or themes we anticipate will be dealt with; and they will be based upon our previous experience of these things.

Exposition This is the opening to a film, which can often be *in medioreum* 'in the middle of things'. It sets up expectations and possibilities, and introduces key characters, locations and ideas.

Free cinema, direct cinema, cinéma vérité (truth) These three documentary movements of the 1950s and 1960s, from Britain, the US and France respectively, are all examples of the development of observational documentary styles. These movements were interested in finding new ways of telling stories in film, thus creating a new film language as well as presenting new subject matter.

Gender and sex Gender and sex are often used interchangeably but there are important differences:

Sex refers to the biological differences between men and women. Sex is fixed and does not change over time; it is the same across countries and across cultures, while gender is often different.

Gender refers to the social differences between men and women, girls and boys. These are the expectations that society has about men and women's roles and responsibilities. These gender expectations will change over time and will be different in different countries and amongst different cultures.

Gender identity The study of representations of gender is important partly because gender is a political issue: Feminism is a social movement that questions gender inequalities and tries to change them, hoping to achieve gender equality, particularly in relation to work and pay. Part of the campaign for equal opportunities relied on pointing out the way that gender expectations prevent equality – and affect men as well as women.

Genre This term has at least a double usage here. It can be used to denote different general types of storytelling extending across a range of different media such as fairy tales, plays and TV soaps; so, simply different types of storytelling. But it can also be used to refer to the classification of films into types such as horror, romantic comedy, thriller or science fiction.

Globalization A perceived economic trend towards the whole world becoming a single market so that major multinational corporations are increasingly able to control trade on a global scale.

'Green-lit' This is a jargon term used within the film industry for obtaining the 'go-ahead' for a film project to move from being a concept to actually starting production.

Hollywood As early as the 1910s the US film industry began to shift its base from the East Coast to what was essentially a place in the Californian desert, a rural area on the edge of Los Angeles. The name 'Hollywood' has, of course, become a term signifying something much more than simply a place in California.

Iconography This simply refers to characteristic features of a genre, the things you expect to see and sounds you expect to hear that taken together collectively tell you the type of film, or genre, you are watching.

As with all other film terms, knowing the name and what it means may be useful but it is not essential; it is recognizing the characteristic features that are signalling to you that this is a specific genre and being able to identify them at work within particular scenes within particular films that are important.

Identity The concept of identity refers to the way that different groups (family, friends, schools, government, etc.) in society see us and the way in which we see ourselves. These two views are likely to be different, even conflicting. The factors affecting our identity include gender, race, religion, class, sexuality and nationality which are interlinked and have become more and more complicated. Some people may wish to identify themselves as gay; for others to do so may suggest discrimination or prejudice.

The growth in identity politics such as gay rights and feminism has indicated a move away from political parties to single-issue politics in society.

Ideology A person's or a society's set of beliefs and values, or overall way of looking at the world. The Western world in general is said to be built upon a belief in capitalism, or the idea that what is best for society, or what brings the greatest benefits to a society, is for business to be given free rein to operate without restrictions in an open, competitive market.

Industrial process An industrial process is one that is involved in the manufacture of goods that are being made for sale.

Kailyardism This emphasizes the small town or largely rural aspects of Scotland, depicting those who live in these areas as 'simple folk' of the land. This is usually accompanied by empowering them with folk wisdom and a 'natural' understanding of people (more often than not of either city types or the English), and with a strong sense of community that often involves intrigue.

Lighting This refers to the various ways in which the light whether in the studio or on location is controlled and manipulated in order to achieve the 'look' desired for a particular shot or scene.

Marketing This refers to the total package of strategies used to try to promote and sell a film. Large distribution companies in charge of marketing will employ researchers to investigate the market for any particular film and enable them to keep abreast of shifting trends in consumer practices. They will also use focus groups (or members of the public) from the supposed target market to view and comment upon the film at various stages with the idea of altering the script if necessary. Such early showings of the film behind closed doors are known as test screenings.

All of this will occur before those elements more usually associated with marketing, the screening of cinema trailers, the launching of a press campaign and the instigation of a poster campaign, come into play. Although, of course, the planning for each of these strands involving the development of a clear timetable for each stage of the marketing process will be under way even as the film is being shot.

Messages Messages are deliberately placed communications in a film that are intended to be read, or de-coded by an audience, and which should then affect the spectator's individual understanding of the film. A message may be explicitly expressed (perhaps by having a character spell it out) or may be implicitly expressed and in need of interpretation (in *Get Carter* (MGM/Mike Klinger 1971, Director: Mike Hodges) for instance, the women in the film are all victims, and receive summary punishment at the hands of men – is this a 'hidden' message from the director?).

Explicit messages are normally straightforward with little opportunity for mis-interpretation. Implicit messages are more complex and their understanding is reliant not only on how they have been 'coded' into the film, but also on the spectator's own experiences and belief system.

Messages and values Films can be seen in some sense to embody certain messages that they are working to communicate to the audience. They can also be seen to be attempting to advance certain values while questioning others.

La Haine (Kassowitz, 1995) has been attacked as a film that has a message that is anti-police: whether this is true or not would depend upon how we interpreted characters and scenes within the film and how we understood the filmmakers to be using film construction techniques to emphasize and elevate certain perspectives above others.

Mise en scène This is a term that is borrowed from the theatre and really refers to staging, or 'putting on stage'. It sometimes helps to think of the elements that you can see in the staging of a play: a particular location will be suggested on the stage, characters will be dressed in particular ways, particular objects will be carried by characters or will be prominently placed on the stage, and the actors will be directed to move or perform in particular ways. These theatrical elements are the sub-section parts of the cinematic term; and this effectively reminds us of the way in which the theatre is a key element of film's cultural and artistic origins.

Narrative This term is really quite simply used as another term for 'story'. But it can also be seen (perhaps more correctly) as a more technical term relating to attempts to theorize the principles by which stories are structured. Some theorists, for example, have suggested that all stories have 'deep-seated' underpinning common narrative structures.

Narrative theory and resolution When Film Studies was first developing as an academic subject in the 1960s and 1970s there was a suspicion amongst academics about popular, usually, genre films. Influenced by Marxist views of popular culture many theorists argued that genre films spoon-fed their audiences rather than letting the audience think for themselves. An example of this was the way that endings, or resolutions, of popular films explained everything, while other types of films and film makers, European, 'art' cinema, etc., often left the audience with unanswered questions.

Why does it matter whether the audience is given the answers in a film or questions are left open? Some theorists argued that what happens in the cinema (where most people watched films at this time) has an influence on audience behaviour in the 'real world'; if people get used to being told what to think they will not question society and their place in it. In other words, Hollywood was seen as part of a system which kept the masses in their place – poor, hard working and unquestioning. These ideas are similar to the hypodermic theory in Media Studies – that the audience is injected with messages from popular culture and is unable to question them.

National identity A sense of national identity seems to depend upon some shared stock of images, ideas, norms and values, stories and traditions. Nations might be described as imagined communities or communities that exist in the individual (and the collective?) imagination within the physical borders of a nation-state. This affects the way we see both ourselves and others classified as existing outside the 'in-group'. Yet, national identity does not exist in some singular, uncontested form. Rather it is a site of struggle constantly undergoing a process of re-affirmation or re-definition.

Non-diegetic sound This is the sound that is outside the fictional world, and that characters in the fictional world cannot hear. This would include overlays of soundtrack music and any voice-over narration.

Non-mainstream/alternative/art cinema Although these terms all have slightly different meanings they are often used interchangeably to refer to films which are produced outside of the major film studios – usually Hollywood. They refer to films which in terms of narrative structure (often open rather than closed endings), subject matter, film language, budget, etc. are different from mainstream film. In some cases filmmakers choose to work in this way as they oppose the style and messages and values of Hollywood cinema; in others filmmakers who start in this area move on to big budget films. These areas will be studied in more detail at A2.

Oligopoly Term used to describe the situation in which a small group of companies exerts powerful almost exclusive control over the business being done within any particular industry.

Paradigm The term used to describe the range of choices available at any given moment of film construction. This covers a huge area, everything from which actor from the paradigm of possible actors should be chosen to play a given role, to which hat (from the paradigm ranging from no hat to top hat to deerstalker) a character should wear at any given point in a film.

It is a useful term for us for one reason only and that is it reminds us that at all times choices are being made in the construction of films and it is our job to try to decide why those choices might have been made.

Parallel editing This refers to moving back and forth between two or more narrative lines of action supposedly occurring at the same time.

Performance and movement This refers to the acting that is taking place but the phrase also helps to define a little more clearly what it is we should be looking for: there is a performance going on and essentially it revolves around movement. These movements can range from the miniscule to the expansive, and can involve the whole body or the smallest parts of the body. Everything is included from slow movements of the eye to sudden running and jumping, and each can be 'read' in some way (or several possible ways).

Pleasure Films clearly give us pleasure in a range of ways, otherwise we would not watch them, and yet studying academic subjects is somehow often seen to be at odds with the idea of pleasure. However, since pleasure is the thing that beyond all else stimulates our initial interest in films we should not dismiss it out of hand. In fact, the idea of exactly how films provide us with pleasure will be a key approach to film for us.

The way in which film gives pleasure is most apparent when we consider not just audiences in general but our own personal response to films and yet it is so often neglected by those of us who wish to study film. Maybe this is because the concept of pleasure does not seem to sit well in relation to the idea of study. Or perhaps this neglect of the pleasure principle is to do with a difficulty in deciding how to study such a seemingly vague notion.

However we view all of this, the concept is clearly important not only in relation to narrative structure but also in relation to the way in which human beings seem to be

able to respond to the sheer aesthetic joy of colour, movement, light, shape and size and in particular changing colour, movement, light, shape and size.

The best way to think about the ways in which films create pleasure for an audience is to analyse our own enjoyment of films. Pleasure could be provided by (among other things) an exciting or romantic narrative, the escapism of identifying with characters unlike ourselves or by the visual pleasure provided by the big screen. Film Studies academics have spent a long time trying to explain the different pleasures experienced by film spectators, particularly the enjoyment of aspects of film which do not immediately seem pleasurable such as watching horror films.

Poster campaign A marketing strategy involving the use of a prominently displayed series of posters to promote a film. Each poster will be carefully put together to present what is seen to be a desirable image to be associated with the film and will be strategically placed in the press and positioned on hoardings in such a way as to attempt to catch the eye of the film's target audience. The aim will be to present the public with a clearly defined notion of exactly what is special or particular about this film. This is sometimes referred to as the film's 'unique selling point', or USP.

Reading This is a fundamentally important term in our whole approach to Film Studies. 'Reading' immediately suggests a depth of investigation and an intensity of focus that 'watching films' simply does not convey.

Realism Realism is a visual style which is particularly associated with British cinema such as the British New Wave of the 1960s. It is an attempt to show the world as it really is and tends to concentrate on social and political issues and how these affect working-class characters. A realist style has its own codes and conventions (particular style of acting, lighting, dialogue, setting, plots, etc.) which the audience recognizes as realist.

Release pattern This is the part of the marketing strategy that determines the number of prints of the film that are to be initially put out to cinemas, which cinemas are to receive the film to begin with, and then how that initial release of the film is to be expanded and built upon.

A film might be given a 'general release' right across the country or it might have a 'select release' to a few cinemas in a few cities where the audience is felt to be right for this particular film. A 'saturation release' would indicate that the effort has been to put the film out immediately to as many cinemas as possible.

A film is usually released first of all within its country of origin before moving out to other countries in a developmental fashion, although it is now possible for a big Hollywood film to have a single global release date.

Whatever pattern is adopted, the key thing to recognize is the way in which market analysts will have worked together to try to decide upon the strategy that will be best suited to maximizing box-office returns on their product.

Representation Representation is the re-presentation or interpretation of an image, an action, a conversation, etc. As it re-presents the original from the perspective of the

person (screenwriter, director, cinematographer, etc.) constructing the representation, it can never accurately capture the original, but will instead offer a partial view, coloured by messages and values.

Repression Repression is the process of being kept down by force (not always physical); it refers to the way that a person's right to freedom of expression whether politically, socially or culturally can be denied.

In psychoanalysis the term 'repression' has a different meaning. Freud defines repression as a defence mechanism. It is the way that individuals protect themselves from harmful but attractive desires (often sexual). According to Freud such desires can never be completely repressed but return, in the form of dreams for example.

Resolution The final phase of a narrative film that quite simply resolves all the storylines that have been set running. Films may of course leave some matters unresolved.

Satire The use of ridicule, irony or sarcasm to expose vice or stupidity; the lampooning of self-important individuals.

Slasher movie A type of horror film in which the story revolves around psychotic males with plans to murder a group of young people. This sub-genre was at its height in the 1970s and early 1980s with films such as *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (Hooper, 1974), *Halloween* (Carpenter, 1978), *Friday the 13th* (Cunningham, 1980) and *Nightmare on Elm Street* (Craven, 1984).

Swinging Britain This term relates to changes in a whole range of attitudes, behaviours, and moralities where Britain finally shook off the bleak, postwar way of living, where caution, practicality, repression, and obedience were the norms. The term 'swinging' comes from a form of music that was more relaxed and open in its style. The 'swinging sixties' really began in 1963 with the emergence of the Beatles and the Mersey music scene, and its London counterpart. With full employment, young people had a greater disposable income, and music and fashion came to dominate the culture. Confident in peace and prosperity, this 'swinging' approach developed across social boundaries, and an 'anything goes' attitude was popularized.

Synergy The multiplied business energy that is created by multinational multimedia ownership. By owning newspapers, magazines, book publishing and music companies, TV and radio stations, satellite/cable TV companies, alongside their involvement in cinema production, distribution and exhibition these massive corporations might be able to:

- publicize and advertise their films via their own print, sound and visual media arms;
- put out associated books and music, again from within their own organization;
- show their films via their own various TV and cinema outlets.

Tartanry This encompasses a range of representations that see the Scots in traditional dress: either as the noble heroic Highland rebel, the laird or educated intellectual, or as the drunken, bagpipe-playing comedy act, and is one that focuses on the tartan as the key to Scottish identity (for better or worse).

Tartanry, Kailyardism, and Clydesideism There are three types of representation that rise above all others in Scottish film and suggest not only some regional variance within Scotland, but also a sense of internal conflict between the past and present, the rural and the urban.

Technological determinism The assumption that technological progress is inevitable and determines the shape and nature of social change.

Teenpic A film featuring teenagers as the central characters and aimed at teenage audiences. The stories focus on the sorts of problems and difficulties faced by young people of this age.

Television This might perhaps at first seem a strange choice of key term when considering cinema and film. However, TV is clearly in the business of screening staged film dramas and from this perspective is in immediate competition with cinema. On the other hand, since TV has provided a ready-made screen in every home since the 1960s the potential of a further space in which to show film products also becomes apparent. And when we reach the era of first video and then DVD, these products depend entirely for their success or otherwise upon people having access to screens within as wide a variety of places as possible.

Theme In analysing the subject matter of films and the way that they construct messages and values, we need to distinguish between the story and the themes. The plot is the action or story of the film; when someone asks you what a film is about, this is usually what you would relate to them. The themes of a film are what the plot makes you think about, the way that the film comments on wider issues. For example the story of *Bridget Jones's Diary* is: a 'thirty-something' single woman falls in love with the wrong man before realizing that Mark Darcy is her true love. The theme of the film is: the changing position of women in society – now that women are independent in terms of career and financial power how does this affect their traditional roles in society and their relationships with men?

'The talent' This is a film industry term for the main creative players involved in the production of any particular film. It is often used to refer to the director, the producer, the screenwriter and the lead actors as a group of key personnel, but may include others such as an art director, director of cinematography and musical director.

Trailers A short advert for a film put together by the distributors. It will usually be comprised of extracts from the film in question with an added voice-over designed to sell the film. A shorter version of the trailer sometime before the film is due out is known as a 'teaser'.

Values Values are an expression of what an individual or a society considers important, in terms of social behaviour, laws, attitudes, beliefs, etc. Values are of course both changeable and relative to each other and situations where they are applied.

Systems or sets of values can be expressed as an *ideology* (a belief system), which, again, can be an individual ideology or an ideology defined by a society.

It is perfectly possible for an individual to hold their own set of values within a broader set of values belonging to a society. Thus someone could accept the broad values of a democracy whilst being a tyrant in their own home.

Vampire movie A horror sub-genre that owes a lot to Bram Stoker's novel D*racula* (1897) and tends to feature male characters preying upon female victims, on this occasion by sucking their blood.

Vertical integration The way in which studios in the 1930s and 1940s integrated the whole process from making to screening films under their control.

VHS Video Home System, Matsushita's video tape format which became the home norm for recording after overcoming its commercial rival, Sony's Betamax system, in the 1980s.

Viewing pleasure There is the simple human pleasure of looking, or scopophilia (seen by Freud as one of the infantile sexual drives) and voyeurism, the act of watching others without their knowledge, both of which have been explored in film theory in relation to the act of watching films in a darkened room. But there are also pleasures derived from aspects of the film viewing experience such as being able to solve mysteries, to follow a causal chain of events, to identify with strong characters, to recognize narrative patterns or genre features seen before, to be surprised or even shocked by images or portrayed events, to be able to experience fear in safety and so on.

Windows A term used to suggest the variety of places that films can now be viewed.

Zombie film A horror sub-genre in which the dead (the zombies) come back to life and attack the living. See N*ight of the Living Dead* (Romero, 1968) and S*haun of the Dead* (Wright, 2004) to compare older and more recent treatments of the genre.

WEB RESOURCES

www.baftascotland.co.uk	BAFTA (Scotland)
www.bbc.co.uk	British Broadcasting Corporation
www.bbfc.co.uk	The British Board of Film Classification
www.bfi.org.uk	British Film Institute
www.bostonreview.net	Boston Review
www.britishpictures.com	a resource offering essays, articles, reviews, and title specific information,
www.britmovies.co.uk	valuable for synopses, cast lists, etc.
www.britishpictures.com	a resource offering essays, articles, reviews, and title specific information
www.cjr.org	Columbia Journalism Review (up-to-date information on who owns what in the media entertainments industry)
www.cyberfilmschool.com	Cyber Film School: Pro-end DV filmmaking site
www.disney.co.uk or disney.go.com	Disney online
www.edinfilm.com	Edinburgh Film Focus – strategic agency for film in Edinburgh
www.en.wikipedia.org	Wikipedia: the free online encyclopedia.
http://www.filmcouncil.org	Film Council
www.filmeducation.org	Film Education
www.filmfestivals.com	Filmfestivals
www.filmsite.org	Filmsite
www.filmundergound.com	Film Underground: DV filmmaking site
www.glasgowfilm.org.uk	Glasgow Film Office – strategic agency for film in Glasgow

www.film.guardian.co.uk	The Guardian online – film
www.hollywoodreporter.com	the Hollywood Reporter – online entertainment news
www.imdb.com	the Internet Movie Database
www.newscorp.com	News Corporation
www.script-o-rama.com	Drew's Scriptorama: script and screenwriting site
www.scotfilm.com	The Scottish Highlands and Islands Film Commission
www.scottishscreen.com	Scotland's leading film body (and film archive)
www.sony.net	Sony
www.skillset.org/film	Skillset
www.stonewall.org.uk	Stonewall
www.timewarner.com	Time Warner
www.themakingof.com	the making of Hollywood's hit movies
www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk	UK Film Council
www.variety.com	Variety
www.visitscotland.com	the Scottish Tourist Board site
www.w3.tvi.cc.nm.us/~jvelez/MMS170/storyboard	storyboarding: history, purpose, and techniques

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